

RETURN FIRE

wide-ranging anarchist anthologies, submissions, translations & editorials since 2013, from the British Isles & beyond

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VOLUME 6, CHAPTER V
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find the
corner of
your
mind where
imagination can run
riot



and, there, strike



RECLAIM YOUR QUEER FUCKING LIFE!

This isn't breaking news. Queers before us have lived, loved, dreamt, fought and died on these ideas. But words are words. The reason why we choose the anarchist, utopian, militant and decadent Queer politic is because we've always inherently been in a hopeless conflict with the alternative. We've lived it. What does neoliberal acceptance do for queer sex-workers, or teenage trannies sleeping in the streets, or fag-bashing survivors, dyke addicts, punks with AIDS, fat drag queens, genderless prisoners? Pride [ed. – see **'Not Fighting the Same Fight'**]-themed adverts won't



"Many blame queers for the decline of this society – we take pride in this. Some believe that we intend to shred-to-bits this civilization and it's moral fabric – they couldn't be more accurate. We're often described as deprived, decadent and revolting – but oh, they haven't seen nothing yet." – Mary Nardini Gang (2009)

1. Existence Is Resistance

We are Queer. This is not synonymous with any of LGBTQIA+ in isolation, or any single, stable constrictive identity. Queer is never a singularity, it is fluid and shifting and growing. It rises and falls with the ocean, spits and flickers with the flames, screams and turns with the wind: it's more than the sum of its parts. As an umbrella term for the individual letters in the acronym, queer, note the lowercase, has found popularity. Our definition of Queer however, note the upper case, is that of an oppositional force, forged in the fire of a war being waged on anything that challenges normalcy. Normalcy is white supremacist, is capitalist, is allocisheteronormative [ed. – i.e., assumes everyone is 'straight'/non-'LGBTQIA+', etc.], is patriarchal, is monogamous [ed. – see **Comments on 'Polyamory?'**], is able-bodied. Queer, is everything else.

"Queer is a territory of tension, defined against the dominant narrative of white hetero monogamous patriarchy, but also by an affinity with all who are marginalized, otherized and oppressed. Queer is the abnormal, the strange, the dangerous.

Queer involves our sexuality and our gender, but so much more. It is our desire and fantasies and more still. Queer is the cohesion of everything in conflict with the heterosexual capitalist world. Queer is a total rejection of the regime of the Normal."
– Mary Nardini Gang (2014)

stop us freezing to death when we can't afford to pay the bills, and can't get a job because we dropped out of school when our abusive homophobic families kicked us out. Brighton's rainbow police cars will still arrest you for illegally distributing free HRT [Hormone Replacement Therapy], for daring to challenge the normalcy that demands years of suffering and begging and compromise and sacrifice before finally the normalcy agrees to expand and exploit you all the same. Queer people are made an underclass by design. Creating an underclass out of anyone that isn't white, able-bodied, neurotypical, allocishet, monogamous is the entire mission statement of the capitalist nation-state. Our restricted access to housing, healthcare, money, safety, etc, isn't accidentally lacking, it's artificially restricted, made conditional on terms structured by the normalcy, with the threat of marginalisation, impoverishment and death hanging over us like the sword of fucking Damocles. It's the same deal with the devil that whispers in our eras, "wait for things to get better..." – because what in the fucking world would make that happen?

"The first lesson a Revolutionary must learn is that he is a doomed man." – Huey P. Newton (1973)

As Queer people we live inside of a society which is intent on killing us. The tension between Queer and normalcy began before any of our first screams, but it's our autonomy in force that creates: Queer as an oppositional force to a world that wants us dead. And more of us have been killed than my heart could possibly bear. Through malice, negligence, spite, ignorance, integration, apathy, people that would have been our parents, siblings, grandparents, teachers, idols, heroes, mentors, lovers, children, died decades before the utopia they were dedicated

to even stand a chance. To just say that we carry their legacy with them doesn't feel like enough, it's literally our history. As Queers it is our duty and our honour to burn the white supremacist, capitalist, allocisheteronormative, patriarchal, monogamous world to the ground, take the names of the hundreds, thousands, millions and etch them into the foreheads of dead cops with a knife. Plant trees and paint art and love each other in their names. The tension that requires the oppositional force is historic as much as it is economic, ideological and social. We are Queer because we have no other choice, and never have done. We exist, therefore we resist. It's not a slogan, or a mantra, it's a fucking battle cry.

2. The Fucking State of Things

There are essentially the two mechanisms that a society of normalcy uses to oppress Queer people and communities: elimination and assimilation.

Elimination is the cruel, snarling, sharp edge of the sword. It's fascistic and genocidal, enforced by the state or another entity with a monopoly on violence. It's almost a decade of waiting for life saving medication. It's letting countless die from disease. It's laws against faggots fucking or crossdressing. It's Section 28 [ed. – 1988-2003 prohibition on British schools 'promoting' – i.e. educating about – 'homosexuality']. It's the WHRC [Women's Human Rights Campaign] declaration [ed. – claims that "transgenderism" breaches United Nations limitations on discrimination against women]. It's TERFs and "gender-critical feminists" being conspiratorial fascists [ed. – see **About the Reactionary Drift of Some "Comrades"...**]. It's everyone who's ever demanded details about your genitals, deadname, sexuality with entitlement and aggression. It's putting trans people in gendered prisons [ed. – see **R.I.P Taylor**], burying them under the wrong pronouns and filling the silence of mourning with their deadname. It's deportations to countries where these things are colonial exports [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg36**]. To be Queer, to defy the normalcy, is to provoke reaction that will attempt to eliminate you. Sometimes you're murdered in the street, sometimes you're not allowed to adopt a child. Either way, they're fucking terrified of you having your own family, legacy, community, for fear of the ideas and principles that may live on past your time. Our bodies face the brunt of the violence, our self-defence punishable with prison time – both methods of stripping you bare and attempting to eradicate your Queerness in whatever form it takes and through whichever method it takes. We're burned, stabbed, shot, starved and then thrown in unmarked graves, for the sake of profit and hierarchy. The mission is the ultimate denial of your autonomy and safety, the ultimate denial of your Queerness.

“WAKE UP! Modern societies are founded upon a scapegoat mechanism and we are unwittingly cultivating ourselves as lambs for slaughter. We are and have always been the enemy! The pariahs! The outcasts! Don't think for a second we won't be targeted again when the shit hits the fan! OUR LIVES ARE NOT DISPOSABLE”
– SPIT! (2017)

Assimilation on the other hand, turns our own against us. Normalcy, on the occasion it allows us to live, will require our Queerness to be conditional and policed and tamed and palatable to the sensibilities of eliminationists. Fuck their conditions. We are offered marriage rights, a chance to settle into monogamy and standard capitalist family structures. We are offered business opportunities, where if you're exploitable enough, and exploit others enough, you could emulate RuPaul's bastardisation of drag culture, and be propped up as a token for media companies and sponsors to profit from, and in your spare time oversee a fracking [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg14**] empire. We are offered the opportunity to be politicians, and follow Lloyd Russel-Moyle [gay Member of Parliament for Brighton Kemptown] in enabling centrists that are burning down the planet. Or perhaps a community delegate for a NGO like [ed. – human rights campaigner] Peter Tatchell, being paid by the boots that stamp us as he politely asks them to stop – gesture politics at its fucking worst. We are offered the chance, as Kathleen Stock [ed. – professor at Sussex forced to resign over her transphobia] does, to try and divide the Queers, pull the ladder up, assimilate a small group of cis lesbians and ally with the eliminationists. We are offered pronoun options on official documents, as long as you use the single binary options that they permit: they fucking despise xie having car insurance. We are offered equal military service, to be an agent of imperialism, and this is a symbol of social acceptance. We are offered rainbow-washed corporatism, built by allocishets to profit off our symbols of struggle. The rainbows and pink triangles at Club and Bar Revenge [ed. – iconic Brighton club] mean nothing to every Queer that's been harrassed, groped, assaulted or spiked there. It means nothing to the minimum wage faggots who work there. Every fucking straggot [ed. – pejorative for 'straight'] that turns up to gawk at the faggots and trannies because “they know how to party” should be thrown off the pier. Every rainbow product of a ravenous pop culture is a parasite that keeps Queer labour, Queer personhood and Queer bodies conditional and subservient. We are offered state-supported, police escorted pride parades, as the state becomes the profiteers of our history, policing our public

expressions and dismantling our radical notions of collective autonomy. They recreate and emulate the normalcy that seeks to eliminate us. The nominally-queer ruling class becomes as much of a force for normalcy as any other element of normalcy, with the added stinger of pacifying radical social politics. Elections do not save us. Tolerance does not save us. Acceptance does not save us. Assimilation will not save us. It will surely, but slowly, eliminate us.

“Build an agenda based on the needs of queer minorities. Reject the politics of assimilation, stop begging for tolerance. Welcome the celebration of sexual and gender diversity. Demand the transformation of the system. Truly desacralize democracy and demoralise the judiciary. Define our emotional and sexual needs on our own terms. Value critical difference instead of false equality” – Carlos Motta (2011)

Society is intent on killing you. If it can't kill you, it will try to take away everything that defines you, it will try to erase the history of liberation struggle, piss on the battlefield where our Elders died, it will try to hollow out your community. You will be chewed up and spat out into the culture of death and decay and hunger and loss. It will leave you worse than dead. Thus to be Queer is to fundamentally reject and resist both of these mechanisms, in you mind, soul, heart and body.

3. Queer Unity

“We need to rediscover our riotous inheritance as queer anarchists. We need to destroy constructions of normalcy, and create instead a position based in our alienation from this normalcy, and one capable of dismantling it. We must use these positions to instigate breaks, not just from the assimilationist mainstream, but from capitalism itself. These positions can become tools of a social force ready to create a complete rupture with this world. Our bodies have been born into conflict with this social order. We need to deepen that conflict and make it spread.” – Mary Nardini Gang (2014)

Our weapon for bashing the fuck back? We call it Queer Unity [ed. – see **'Not Fighting the Same Fight'** for some troubling of the concept of unity]. To stand as an agent of Queer resistance, of Queer insurrection, is the practice and principles of Queer Unity: issuing normalcy, and all of its hierarchies, a challenge: the “oppression, fuck off challenge”. It is the complete and total rejection of assimilation and the empowered self-defence against elimination, in all their forms. It is antifascism, anti-capitalism, anti-racism, militant feminism and abolition. It is embracing your affinity with individuals and communities who

share your oppressors. It is every liberation struggle standing arm in arm, dismantling the borders on maps and borders in our minds: they are only weapons for normalcy to divide us. Through Queer Unity, no state, no pig, no fag-basher, no TERF, no fascist, no law can fucking touch us. The endless battle of attrition will not die through the mechanisms and structures that created and maintain it. It will be resolved through our affinity with the oppressed, our resistance to assimilation, non-violence, co-option, respectability. Queer Unity is the oppositional force required to dismantle the hierarchies that keep air from our lungs and fire from our eyes.

“Our tactics are as varied as our genders, our activism as hot as our sex and our resistance as untethered as our desires. By detonating our interior colonies and struggling against all those who work towards our end we open new spaces of creativity and pleasure. Our love is a fugitive practice of destruction and deviance, liberation and difference. Love revolution, not State delusion, Homotopia.” – Homotopia (2006)

Queer Unity is a multi-purpose weapon for Queer liberation. It's the brick that smashes a piggy car's windscreen, and then is repurposed to build our homes, to build our communities, to build a new world. We share food, masks, bandages, hormones, to allow ourselves the space to collectively exist, while collectively resisting. We de-arrest and body block to protect each other, and then cook for each other. We take for ourselves the time and space to be nourished physically, emotionally, creatively, sexually, spiritually. And we need not require permission or fulfil conditions for this. We will not be for profit. Our bodies will not be cogs in your machine. Our bodies will not fear the rage-fueled backlash of normalcy. Our culture, code, creativity, will not be a token. We will not beg, debate, sacrifice or compromise for this. Queer Unity is non-negotiable.

Queer Unity is the endless possibilities that fill our stomachs and awake us from sleep. In a world where we are liberated from normalcy and it's chains, it's everything our autonomy guides us towards. In the meantime, it's acting as if we are already liberated, and embracing the conflict with those who deny us



this. It's an age of sin and criminality that we birth with our blood-stained hands. It's burning down industrial sites to heat up our dinner. It's breaking into Parliament to host an orgy. It's swinging a nail-studded bat at everything that serves to strengthen the clutch that normalcy has on our throats. It's revelling in the downfall of social order, of class structure, of the state and it's little tin soldiers. It's the voluntary association of free individuals. It's smashing every narrative around sexual or gendered differences. It's making sexual health and boundaries of consent the baseline. It's writing to and standing up for incarcerated Queer people. It's walking someone home, it's running a mutual aid stand, defending each other, being unapologetic in your defiance of normalcy, it's unlocking your revolutionary consciousness, it's a lifelong union of love that isn't dependant on the fucking state or a single church, it's knowing our ongoing history of liberation struggle. It's Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, as Street Transvestive Action Revolutionaries, operating a radical mutual aid version of the "house culture" that kept black and brown queer communities alive in New York City in the 1970s. It's building horizontal Queer anti-capitalist spaces, refusing rigid structures, definitions and binaries, it's honouring the dead [ed. – see **Ghosts**], it's not letting each other get caught, it's direct action, it's love for yourself, your community and your partner/s, it's living with hope for a world where normalcy has no power, and we are free. In doing this, we are building a better world for ourselves and the people we love. One that isn't dependent on capitalist or respectability politics, and isn't conditional on reforms that ultimately accept exploitation and violence as insurmountable facts of life. It's going to be beautiful. Queer Unity is when I smash a fascist's teeth out, and my lover cleans the blood off my knuckles, while my friends' stole us dinner, and we toast to the future we know that we're fighting for. Fluid, flammable and ferocious: we will keep each other alive while we burn the world down.

"You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time." – Angela Davis (1972)

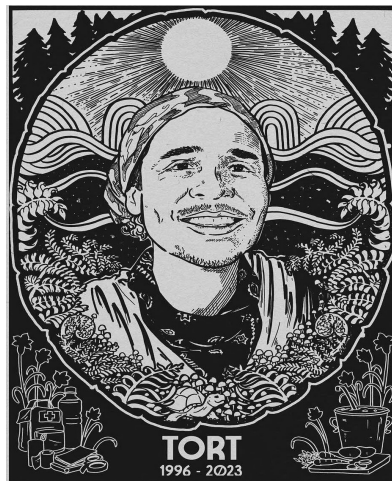
4. Reclamation

Reclaim Pride Brighton began as a gesture of solidarity amongst Queer communities. In Highbury Fields, London, the Reclaim Pride march offered up a space for a collective, unapologetically Queer protest. We attended as a gesture of solidarity from Brighton's

Queer community, whilst we all expressed our solidarity with queer anti-fascists from Los Angeles who were being brutalized by the police and Proud Boys in the aftermath of the Wi Spa incident [ed. – *confrontation in Los Angeles over someone with the 'wrong' genitalia in a changing room*]. Off the back of that, we did one ourselves, in Brighton. A demonstration of Queer Unity as best we could express it, by fucking some shit up as a large crowd of shouting Queers. We gave ourselves the power to speak fearlessly, walk uninhibited and exist autonomously. The influence of state and capital had no power over our expressions of resistance, as Pride historically was as an action, and should always be. The core cell was only about five, and with only a few weeks of organising we managed to create a space outside of the structures that had bastardised Pride into the assimilationist corporate event that everyone knew it as. We have no official leader, we invited no official organisations and have no affiliations. We're Brighton locals from all over the country, who have formed this community of love and resistance out of the necessities of our existence. No room for politicians, no room for careerists, no room for reformists, no room for press. We refuse to play by anyone else's rules, because as soon as we do, our dreams of liberation are swallowed up and spat back out.

"This is a radical action! This is a protest! We are not here to politely ask for reforms: we are not here for the cops, the government, or for any company. What we are doing here today is reminding ourselves, not them, who we are. We are reconnecting with our community, because if we stand together like this every time we are abused, harassed, and humiliated, then no one can fucking touch us. [...]. That is what liberation means, and that is what pride means. So tell me what community looks like! This is what community looks like!" – A speaker at the Reclaim Pride Brighton march (2021)

The euphoria of autonomy that was born from the Reclaim Pride march became what we have dedicated ourselves towards replicating in everyday life. Pride isn't just a necessity for one afternoon of protesting or celebrating, it's a necessity for every aspect of our lives – for every day that we exist under allocisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, and every other hierarchy that governs our lives. Pride is the



Manuel Páez Terán, a.k.a. Tortugueta, queer anarchist of Tomoto-Cuica heritage, shot dead by Georgia State Patrol while defending Weelaunee forest; see 'We Laugh Harder Than Them'

manifestation of Queer Unity: the actions we take as part of our own liberation struggle. That's why we run a monthly mutual aid program to give out food, water, sanitary products, pronoun badges, literature, clothes and more. That's why we attend and organise counter-demonstrations to TERFs, fascists, state and capitalist institutions. That's why the city is plastered with our posters and stickers. That's why we're not going anywhere. And whilst all of these public actions are non-violent, Queer Unity as a practice does inherently require violence as a tool of self-defence and liberation. It's only just that a system built upon violence be dismantled and abolished through whatever means necessary. Pride is absolutely bashing the fuck back, against normalcy, the state, oppressive hierarchies, elimination and assimilation in all their forms. But that doesn't mean that we'll incriminate ourselves publically: plurality of tactics, opsec [ed. – see *Never Turn Off the Phone*], and anonymity are important tools for any movement. In terms of where we stand in all of this, we aim for our actions and programs to build a consciousness and community that has the potential to grow into an insurrectionary liberation struggle. But we're still young, and far from perfect. This kind of project requires dedication, fluidity and engagement with criticism to fully blossom. We may be very far off now, but it gets us fucking excited to think about us, or whoever comes after us, getting there one day.

This isn't for allocishets "allies" to nod their heads and understand. This is for Queers, to everyone internationally who has been subjugated throughout history through violence that controls the autonomy of our bodies, emotions and social roles. This is a call out to your own tragic, deviant, fugitive history, to refuse to be sold, to refuse to bleed, to refuse to be governed by anyone but yourself, to reclaim fucking everything.

We are but one small group of Queers. We are Queer Unity. We are love, rage and solidarity. We are bashing the fuck back. We are reclaiming Pride. We are loving and supporting each other. We are actively working towards the downfall of a society that was built to oppress and kill. And we are fucking proud of it. We are dedicated to our principles and their implementation through actions. We are just getting started. And you should get started too.



IRANIAN ANARCHISTS ON PROTESTS IN RESPONSE TO POLICE MURDER OF MAHSA AMINI



On September 13th, 2022, 22 year old Mahsa Amini was arrested by an Iranian Guidance Patrol (also known as 'morality police'). Mahsa was arrested in Tehran for not abiding by laws relating to dress. Three days later, on September 16th, police informed Mahsa's family that she had "experienced heart failure" and had fallen into a coma for two days before passing away.

Eyewitness accounts, including that of her own brother, make clear that she was brutally beaten during her arrest. Leaked medical scans indicate that she had experienced a brain hemorrhage and stroke – trauma induced injuries which ultimately led to her death.

In the days since these details were revealed publicly, mass demonstrations have broken out across Iran decrying Mahsa's murder at the hands of the police.

To better understand this rapidly changing situation, we conducted a very brief interview with the Federation of Anarchism Era, an organization with sections in Iran and Afghanistan.

This interview was conducted between the dates of 9/20/22 and 9/23/22.

Black Rose / Rosa Negra (BRRN): First, please give a brief description of the Anarchist Federation of Era.

Federation of Anarchism Era (FAE): The Federation of Anarchism Era is a local anarchist federation active in so-called Iran, Afghanistan, and beyond.

Our federation is based on the Synthesis Anarchism, accepting all anarchist tendencies except nationalist, religious, capitalist, and pacifist tendencies. Our many years of organizing experience within extremely oppressive environments like Iran have led us to

develop and utilize insurrectionist organizational tactics and philosophy.

We are an atheist organization, viewing religion as a hierarchical structure that is more ancient and enduring than almost all other authoritarian systems [ed. – see *For the Love of God*] and much too similar to capitalism and other authoritarian social structures enslaving humanity today. Class warfare, from our perspective, includes warring against the clergy class who rob us of our freedom and self-autonomy by defining the sacred & taboo and enforcing them by coercion and violence.

BRRN: Who was Mahsa Amini? When, why, and how was she killed?

FAE: Mahsa Amini, know by her family as Zhina, was an ordinary 22-year-old Kurdish girl from the city of Saghez (Saqez) in Kurdistan.

She traveled with her family to Tehran to visit families. On September 13th, while with her brother, Kiaresh Amini, the morality police or the so-called “Guidance Patrol” arrested Mahsa for “improper hijab.” Her brother tried to resist the arrest, but the police used tear gas and beat Kiaresh as well.

Many other arrested women witnessed what happened in the police van. Along the way to the police station, there was an argument between detainee women and police officers. Mahsa Amini was one of the girls protesting their arrest. She was saying she was not from Tehran and should be let go.

The police used physical violence to shut all the detainee women up. Mahsa was beaten as well. The eyewitnesses said the police officers hit Mahsa’s head hard to the side of the police van.

She was still conscious when she arrived at Moral Security Agency, but the other detained women noticed that she looked unwell. The police were completely indifferent and accused her of acting. The women kept protesting to help Mahsa get the medical attention she needed. The protests were met with violence from the police. Mahsa Amini was beaten severely by police again and lost consciousness then.

Police then took notice and attempted to revive her by pumping her chest and raising and massaging her legs. After those attempts failed, the police attacked other women to confiscate all cellphones and cameras that may have recorded the incident.

After much delay and finding the lost keys to the ambulance, Mahsa was taken to Kasra Hospital. The clinic which admitted Mahsa Amini claimed in an

Instagram post that Mahsa was brain dead when she was admitted. That Instagram post was later deleted.

On September 14th, a Twitter account with a friend working in Kasra Hospital told the story that the police threatened the doctors, nurses, and staff not to take any pictures or video evidence and to lie to Mahsa’s parents about the cause of the death. The hospital, being intimidated, complied with the police. They lied to the parents that she was in an “accident” and kept her on life-support for two days. Mahsa was declared dead on September 16th. Her cause of death from the medical scans, leaked by hacktivists, shows bone fractures, hemorrhage, and brain edema.

BRRN: Did Mahsa’s identity as a Kurd play a role in her arrest and death?

FAE: Undoubtedly, being a Kurd in Tehran played a role in Mahsa’s eventual death. But, this is a reality all women in Iran experience. We don’t need to look far to find video footage of the morality police beating and forcing women into police vans, throwing women out on the street from a moving car, and being harassed by Hijabi women for their “improper hijab.” Those videos show just a tiny fraction of the hell women experience in Iran.

Mahsa being with her brother on the day of her arrest was not random happenstance. In Iran’s patriarchal society, women should bring a male relative, whether a father, husband, brother, or cousin, along with on their business to ward off the morality police and discourage any surly individuals in public. Young couples can’t be seen too close to each other in public or risk being beaten and arrested by the morality police. Relatives needed to have documents as proof of their claims to the police. Arresting women for lipsticks and nail polish was a reality many of us millennials in Iran remember vividly.

The threat of acid attacks for “bad hijab” is another nightmare women endure in Iran. Patriarchy and religious autocracy affect all women.

BRRN: How did the Iranian people learn of Mahsa’s death? What was the initial popular response?

FAE: As we elaborated earlier, there were too many eyewitnesses. No amount of threats could have stopped the story of Mahsa’s death from leaking.

It is worth mentioning the doctor attending Mahsa and the photojournalist documenting Mahsa’s condition and her family in distress, were both arrested, and their current status is unknown.

The initial response was outrage. People were already sharing Mahsa's story from September 14th. The outrage was not yet strong enough for protests and revolts. People still thought Mahsa was in a coma, and there was hope for her recovery. Then, she was declared dead on September 16th.

First, there were small protests at Kasra Hospital, which were scattered by the police. The sparks of the current uprising were lit in Saghez, Mahsa's hometown.

BRRN: What is the scale of the current demonstrations? In what areas of the country have the demonstrations been concentrated?

The situation is very dynamic and changing exceptionally rapidly. At the time of writing this, the flames of the uprising have set 29 out of 31 provinces of Iran on fire. One of the characteristics of this uprising is that it spread to major cities across Iran, such as Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan, Ahvaz, Rasht, and others fast.

Qom and Mashhad, the ideological strongholds of the regime, have joined the uprising. Kish island, the capitalist and commerce center of the regime, has also revolted. This is the most diverse uprising we have witnessed in the last few years.

On September 23rd, the syndicalists are planning a general strike in favor of the protests.

The regime has an armed demonstration planned on the same day. A lot is happening.

BRRN: How has the Iranian state responded to these demonstrations?

The regime's initial response was less brutal than we experienced before. One reason is that they got caught off-guard. They didn't expect this strong response. The more important reason is that Ibrahim Raisi [ed. – head of State] is at the UN. The lack of senior authority figures, publicized story of Mahsa and protests, and the pressure on the government being watched by the international community have stopped the massacre for now.

'WITH EMPTY HANDS'

In memory of our 15-year-old member, comrade Aref Ghanbarzai

Aref Ghanbarzai (Ghanbarzehi), was a 15-year-old member, living in the city of Zahedan in southeastern Iran. He was murdered by two bullets of the fascist regime due to resisting arrest with empty hands in his dilapidated slum residence, on September 22, 2022.

Aref was a militant Anarcho-Egoist and child worker who dedicated himself to learning to read and write Persian language. He showed great interest in contemporary political issues and the history of philosophy in our gatherings.

We do not have a photo of our comrade, because he lacked the ID document like many other Baluchistan people.

WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR PROUD STRUGGLE!

The Anarcho-Egoist Union in Sistan and Baluchistan; A part of the self-organizations within the Federation of Anarchism Era

November 16, 2022

[ed. – Sistan and Baluchistan province is home to minoritised Baloch, Sistani, Kurdish, Brahui and Romani peoples, among others, after British colonial power in the 1870s divided it from Afghanistan and the part of India to become Pakistan (though the Baloch in particular rebelled and maintained autonomy for some time. It is the poorest province of Iran, and the State has been constructing a 'free trade industrial zone' work-camp there, as well as sending hundreds of Shiite missionaries to convert the predominantly Sunni Baluch.)]

Don't get us wrong. Police killed and injured many people from day one of the protests. Some among them were 10 years old children and 15 years old teenagers [ed. – see **'With Empty Hands'**]. But, we experienced November 2019 when the regime massacred many thousands of people in 3 days [ed. – during protests after petrol prices were doubled].

In all the previous uprisings, the police were not directly the target of the ire of people. Not this time. They are the baddie this time, and people are out for their blood. This wears them down physically and mentally, which we take as good news.

Right now, Saghez and Sanandaj are experiencing ruthless suppression. The regime has brought tanks and heavy military vehicles to suppress the uprising there. There are many reports of live ammunition being shot at protestors.

The protests are still going. The police cars are being flipped. The police stations were scaled and burned down. We just need to arm ourselves by looting their armory. Then, we enter another phase of revolt altogether.

BRRN: Is it accurate to call these demonstrations feminist in character?

F AE: Yes, absolutely. Like all other uprisings, there were developments and movements beneath the surface.

It can be said that the recent crackdown on the Hijab and increased brutality of the morality police started in response to Iranian women’s spontaneous, autonomous, and feminist self-organization. Earlier this year, women in Iran began to black-list and boycott people and businesses, such as cafes, that strictly enforce the Hijab. The movement was decentralized and leaderless, aimed at creating safe spaces for women and members of the LGBTQ community.

That brutal oppression culminated at this moment where women are at the forefront everywhere, burning their scarves and beating down cops without Hijab. The main slogan of the uprising is also “Woman, Life, Freedom,” a slogan from Rojava [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg97*], a society whose ambitions are based on anarchist, feminist, and secular ideology.¹



26.09.22, Qamishli, Rojava: headscarves burn in solidarity with Iranian revolt



1 ed. – Although Iran has been in a state of revolutionary ferment for five years, with multiple riotous struggles and student, pensioner, nurse and other worker struggles, the Kurdish element bears further comment. The slogan *Jin, Jina, Azadî* (Women, Life, Freedom), now common in Rojava, has history in Bakur, the part of Kurdistan held by Turkey. Mahsa Amini was only one name of the young woman whose murder sparked this latest surge; like many Kurds in Iran (which often won't recognise non-Farsi names), as well as this 'official' name she was known in Kurdish as Jina, also the 'Life' part of the slogan. It was Kurdish women who began the cry of *Jin, Jina, Azadî* after her murder (also chanting “Kurdistan, Kurdistan, the graveyard of fascists”), and which then spread across the region; during the uprising in general, solidarity among

BRRN: What political elements (organizations, parties, groups) are present in the demonstrations, if any?

F AE: Many organizations, parties, and groups attempt to appropriate or influence the protests for their benefit at every uprising.

The majority of them ran into an unscalable problem during this uprising.

First, the monarchists. Reza Pahlavi, the deadbeat son of so very dead previous Shah of Iran, an individual being propped up by stolen money and media networks outside Iran, called for a national day of mourning amidst public outrage and initial protests instead of using his resources to assist the revolt. People finally saw him for the charlatan that he is. “Death to oppressors, whether Shah or Leader,” was heard all across Iran.

Then, MEK or Mujahedin Kalq. MEK has an ideological problem with this uprising. They are a cult whose women members are forced to wear red scarves. Their origin story is from combining Marxist and Islamic ideologies, hijacked by Marxist-Leninists before 1979, to the cult in service of capitalist and imperialist states today. Yet, the women in Iran are burning their headscarves and Quran. They have no say in this political climate.

Then, there are communist parties who despise Rojava and always speak ill of it. Their debunked and rusty class analysis doesn't help them win hearts here.

With all their talks and propaganda of being proponents of secularism and feminism, they didn't even have one slogan geared toward women's liberation. And their ideology prevented them from chanting “Women, Life, Freedom.” They had nothing to say, so they shut up. Thanks to that, their presence is much weaker in the protests today.

The Anarchist movement is growing in Iran. This uprising, being leaderless, feminist, anti-authoritarianism, and chanting Rojava slogans, led to anarchists, affiliated and unaffiliated with the federation, having a strong presence in this uprising. Unfortunately, many have been arrested and injured as well.

We are working to realize the anticapitalist potential of this movement. Because the Islamic Republic is a death cult and religion, patriarchy, racism, and capitalism are its ideological pillars. For us to live, we need to be free; and that can't be done without women's liberation **at the forefront.**

traditionally-opposed minoritised ethnicities is notable.

TECHNO-SHARIA, MORALITY POLICE & PSYCHOPOLICE

[Theodor] Adorno defined fascism in his time as “technically equipped barbarism.” While that definition stood out as one of the most precise, it nevertheless left the concept of barbarism in vagueness and ambivalence. Think, in the Marxist sphere, of the successful slogan “socialism or barbarism!”; loaded more and more with positivism and the ideology of a progressive advance toward classless society, [Amadeo] Bordiga [ed. – who founded the Italian Communist Party] contrasted it with a resolute and outrageous “communism or civilization!” Not only does industrial and technological development not give birth to communism, it does not in itself “democratize” either customs or social relations.

More than a century ahead of those debates, the very young Leopardi had already centered the issue in one of the first thoughts of his Zibaldone: “Reason is a lamp: nature wants to be illuminated by reason not set on fire.” From this dazzling insight descends the reflection on the oppositional pair civilization-barbarie that runs throughout Leopardi’s work. Barbarie, for the poet-philosopher, is both that which precedes that light and the epoch of the overt and manifest fire, the triumph of a “geometrical reason” that is a “most false system of most true parts,” that is, “reasoned villainy,” the artificialization of lives and passions: **in short, excess of civilization.**

As the sequel showed, this was not merely a linguistic problem. The world still struggles, and more and more ruefully, with that ambivalence, although it changes its historical forms. Is not “technically equipped barbarism” Islam 4.0 under construction in Iran, a system that merges Sharia, social credit¹ and facial

1 ed. – “In Rongcheng [China], each citizen is assigned 1,000 initial points, and each score corresponds to a specific letter: AAA to D. The letter ‘A’ (equivalent to 1,000 points) is the basic score and entails access to certain benefits, such as preferential assistance in employment and priority in school enrolment. One can aim to increase one’s score through behaviour considered by the Chinese Communist Party as ‘virtuous’: paying taxes and bills on time, making certain purchases, sharing and spreading party ideas, etc. a long list of behaviours by which the ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘virtuousness’ of citizens is judged. Of course, reporting people whose attitudes are deemed to be improper leads to an increase in one’s score. The benefits for the highest level (AAA, accessible to those with more than 1,050 points) include: higher pension insurance, subsidies for public transport, the possibility of applying for interest-free loans, being able to rent vehicles without having to leave a deposit, requiring fewer documents for travel visas, etc.

One’s score also becomes a symbol of prestige to be displayed online, as it already is on the Baihe website, which already allows its users to publish their score. On the other hand, those who are in a difficult situation and therefore pay their bills, rent or taxes late will inevitably

recognition? We read, “Under the new hijab and chastity law enacted in Iran on Aug. 15, women who post their headscarfless photos on the Internet will suffer the temporary loss of certain social rights for a period of six months to a year. In addition, women deemed non-compliant will be barred from entering government offices, banks or traveling on public transportation. Government employees will be fired if their images on social media do not comply with what the Islamic laws dictate. Numerous women have been arrested for not complying with the dress code and forced to confess.” And again, “The Iranian government plans to use facial

have their points deducted; the same goes for those who do not cross at a pedestrian crossing, who litter, who express political opinions not in line with the party, etc. The list of behaviour deemed ‘immoral’ is very long.

If one’s score falls below 600 points, one is put on the ‘black list’ and labelled ‘D’, which leads to real punishments. Should this happen to parents, their children would be excluded from those considered the best schools in the region. Other punishments include: being subject to recurring inspections, not being able to buy plane tickets to leave the country, not being allowed to live in certain areas of the city, public disclosure of one’s personal information, being banned from becoming a civil servant, and because companies may know who is on this ‘black list’, finding any employment becomes more difficult, facilitating the exploitation of those on this list. As if this were not enough, their faces are displayed on giant screens in shopping malls and other public places, in a sort of modern pillory, and the ringtone of their mobile phones is changed to sound like a siren, making them identifiable and judged by anyone. The Chinese social credit system is not limited to analysing an individual’s behaviour. In fact, one’s score is also supposed to be influenced by the behaviour of the people closest to him or her: dating or being in a relationship with those on the ‘black list’, i.e. people who do not respect the laws or who criticise the party, results in one’s score being lowered.

[...] The West is not exempt from the use of similar systems, and lately, even Italy has started experimenting with social credit in some municipalities, now on a voluntary basis, but in the future it will become an integral part of the emerging model of society.

The city of Fidenza, in Emilia Romagna, has activated a points card for social housing tenants in order to assess the behaviour of each family and decide whether or not they are worthy of residing there.

Tenants are required to observe a long list of rules that can increase or decrease the initial 50 points assigned to each household. Relationships with neighbours will be put to the test, as the reporting of behaviour deemed improper will increase one’s score.

Those who are reported will undergo an inspection of their flat by officers to verify the veracity of the allegations. A simple plant on the landing that inconveniences due to watering or being in the way will cost the tenant 20 points.

Even keeping the barbecue grill on the balcony, or hosting people from outside the household without notifying the municipality will result in the loss of 10 points in the first case, and 25 points and the payment of a fine in the second. Losing points is extremely easy, and if

'3, 4, 5G...'

Telework, digital cage... boom!

Obedience, brainwashing... boom!

Screens, chips, tracking... boom!

Smartphone, smart home, smart city [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg31*]... boom!

Green technologies, grey lives... boom!

Military industry, energy industry,
industry at large... boom!

Always connected,
always more stupid... boom!

A small contribution that the State and its
journalists were kind enough to pass over in
silence.

**On February 28 [2021], the offices and a 4×4 of
the telecom company GMS (a subsidiary of
Scopelec) in Château-Arnoux-Saint-Auban were
burned down.** GMS is the main 5G [ed. – see *The
5G Net*] installer in the region. We also left a little
message: 3, 4, 5G... BOOM!

*Strength and courage to those
who attack without delay.*

War on the technoworld.

We will strike again and again.

PS.

but also:

Creativity + determination = boom

preparation + audacity = boom

love + anarchy = boom

recognition technology on public transportation. The announcement comes directly from the secretary of Iran's Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, Mohammad Saleh Hashemi Golpayegani."

Technology, like the nature it reifies, does not make leaps. "Since 2015, the Iranian government has gradually introduced biometric ID cards that include a chip in which data such as iris scans, fingerprints and facial images are stored. Today there are concerns that such information held by the state may be used in conjunction with facial recognition technology to identify people who violate the mandatory dress code, both on the streets and on the Internet. Many analysts point out that Iran's government is now able to track its citizens very easily wherever they are."

Meanwhile, "some of the women arrested for defying the new August 15 decree were identified after videos were posted online of them being harassed on public

the score drops to zero the right to housing lapses and you are forced to leave your home." (The Social Credit System).

transportation because they were not wearing the garment properly." In short, it is the police as automated management of the polis that makes the morality police more effective and oppressive. The servility and fanatical adherence of so many oppressed people who become oppressors themselves, on the other hand, are abjections that run through all degrees of technical development.

**As I wholeheartedly participate in the
courageous uprising of Iranian women, who
defy both the high-tech injunctions of the
moral police and the murderous lead of the
uniformed police, I spit in the face of those
who, instead of picking up that example to
insubordinate themselves to the "technically
equipped barbarism" that imprisons us too
and is leading us straight to world war, ill-
concealedly contrast "Western freedoms"
with Iran's algorithmic patriarchy.**

Just as I am writing these notes, the judicial police notify me of the supervisory magistrate's decision to deny me, for the third semester of my home detention, the forty-five days of early release, that is, the "sentence discount" that should be automatic in the absence of disciplinary reports in prison or violation of judicial prescriptions during the so-called alternative measures. The magistrate informs me that although my conduct was "formally correct," I maintained "a propulsive role from an ideological standpoint" and an "anti-state drive." Attitudes that – don't miss the robed prose, between old-fashioned literary vexations and concepts of social orthopedics somewhere between [Cesare] Lombroso [ed. – *influential criminologist and advocate of phrenology, a classist and often racist biological theory*] and Stalinism [ed. – see '*Not Fighting the Same Fight*'] – "shine a light on the failure of the convicted person to initiate the path of critical revision of the deviant experience and the failure of him to effectively participate in the re-educational work." Now, if the charge of a crime (not the rest itself, of course) is an "objective" fact, how does one measure the "re-education" or "repentance" of a convicted person?

In my case, through a text² about the murder of Matteo Tenni by a carabinieri in Ala (Trento, Italy), on April 9, 2021, and the subsequent dismissal. **In short, I am free to write – it is not like we are in Russia or Iran – they are free to prolong my detention because of what I write** (appealing, in the absence of crimes, to the "thrusts" that my words express).

If the judicial demerit of not repenting and maintaining an anti-state attitude is a source of pride for me, I register that the policing of moral mores in our latitudes takes the form of courtroom psychopolice.

2 ilrovescio.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/per-Matteo.pdf

ON STAYING WOKE IN POLYCRISIS FUTURISM

[ed. – This is included in the spirit of this volume of *Return Fire* in its aim to critically engage with the parts of anarchism (or those adjacent) who identify partly or wholesale with leftism, to see where we concur and where more caution or hostility is required. It's by Sam Moore, a former co-host of anti-fascist *12 Rules for What* podcast and co-author of recent books on the far-right and environmentalism. We have serious concerns with some of Sam's positions regarding State intervention against fascists (namely, that such powers are inevitably and primarily directed against us above and beyond the fascists themselves), and cannot publish his other work here without noting as much.]

Last week's reading in the Collapsology group was an essay¹ by UK climate activist and notable Extinction Rebellion (XR) [ed. – see **Stop HS2 & Extinction Rebellion**] spokesperson Rupert Read. While Read's piece is primarily focused on climate politics in the UK, the social movement dynamics he describes and trajectory he proposes have broader implications, particularly for how the Western world responds to climate breakdown in the coming years.

“When we speak about “anthropogenic climate change,” we speak about climate change that is intimately linked to our modern or industrial lifestyles, ones that feel like a routine of jumping through and between boxes: The box shape of the house to the rolling rectangle of the bus, which leads us to work, back to the car, then to the bar, back home, to the computer before bed, and finally, to the rest that anticipates repeating this routine all over again, with hopes of something different for the weekend. In its most simple and basic form, this is the process of anthropogenic climate change. It reeks of the depressing problem of everyday social control and daily confinement within this box system. What these lifestyles are dependent on are a series of systemic processes: those of industrial waste that result from mining, oil extraction, electricity generation, cars, concrete, asphalt, electronics, and the list goes on. And climate change is really just the result of needing to make this list of resource extraction and technologies grow for the last two hundred years, while intertwining this need with our daily lives.”

– *The Green Economy as a Continuation of War by Other Means*

1 systems-souls-society.com/what-next-on-climate-the-need-for-a-moderate-flank

The question Read ultimately addresses is a central concern of collapsology: the form-taking of collective agency in response to the failure of systems that support life and ways of life. **There is a real danger in calling for a mass movement that explicitly rejects the scope, complexity, and systemic drivers of the crisis (or crises) it aims to mitigate and manage.** Which is what Read does in his essay.

Within the history of social movements, a recurrent pattern is the formation of a broader “moderate flank” and a further left “radical flank.” A classic example is the US Civil Rights movement, with Martin Luther King Jr. leading the moderate flank and Malcolm X leading the radical flank. Roughly, the strategic function of the radical flank is to shift the Overton window [ed. – *the concept of the range of policies politically acceptable to the mainstream population at a given time*] and nudge the center towards positions (further left or right) that can be captured by the moderate flank.

The UK-specific formulation Read presents is essentially this: Extinction Rebellion started with the intention of being a more moderate mass movement, but shifted further to the left, thus becoming a radical flank, leaving a vacuum in the center.² He now calls for the emergence of a moderate flank to the climate movement. For Read, what this means is explicitly disengaging with approaches that frame climate in



2 Given the explicitly non-violent stance adopted by XR [ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics**], and the political diversity contained within the movement, one can reasonably question Read's characterization of XR as “radical.” The emphasis of this piece is a more general critique concerning the intersection of social justice and climate in relation to collective agency. Here, Read's treatment of UK climate politics serves as a lens through which to explore a broader set of dynamics that may (and likely will) find other iterations elsewhere.

relation to forms of oppression, all of which he diminutively lumps under the rubric of “wokeness.”

Read writes, “The ‘woke’ (‘intersectional’ identity-politics-based) approach to inclusiveness involves a certain jargon that is itself not inclusive to most of the population. It is of course fine, good, for intersectional approaches to be part of the movement. Likewise decolonial approaches. It is not fine for them to demand that the entire movement take their form. For that is ex-clusive of the majority.”

The problem with this is that we inhabit what geographer Kathryn Yusoff has described as a “colonial Earth” – or, as Jairus Grove articulates, the “Eurocene” – **a planet where historical processes of colonization and intersectional oppression are deeply, ecologically entangled with Earth systems and foundational to contemporary geopolitics.** These processes are systemic drivers of climate change as a global and historical problem. How states and corporations exercise power over bodies is fundamentally, materially linked to how energy and resources are mobilized and deployed. The polycrisis³ is not a question of parts per million CO₂; it is a question of how power puts nature to work. There is no way to reasonably separate anthropogenic⁴ climate change from how energy and resources are metabolized by civilization at a planetary scale.

Read writes, “The climate/ecology struggle is very different from the struggles that typically get invoked, by XR and [Andreas] Malm [*ed. – see the supplement to Return Fire vol.6 chap.3; Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism*] alike, as would-be precedents. Because it is not a struggle for self-liberation on the part of an oppressed group.” How power puts nature to work *is through* intersectional oppression; climate systems breakdown is an effect of that configuration; and, atmospheric carbon is one (albeit very important) valence of that unwell hyperobject.⁵

3 Multiple converging and interacting systemic risks with the potential to produce cascading effects. (We’ll be writing more about this concept in the future.)

4 *ed. – Even to call this crisis ‘anthropogenic’ (i.e. caused by humans per se) invisibilises those who have had the least influence or gain in causing it, yet are in most cases those fighting hardest against those who have and do: see Indigenous Anarchist Convergence – Report Back.*

5 *ed. – A concept developed by Timothy Morton to refer to huge phenomena – from black holes to wildness (see ‘All That Wildness Names’) to capitalism – whose impacts defy our immediate physical perceptions. From his Introducing the Idea of ‘Hyperobjects’: “Things like: not just a Styrofoam cup or two, but all the Styrofoam on Earth, ever. All that Styrofoam is going to last an awfully*

“At this time of heartfelt discussions between good souls intent on making the world a better place, we too feel like making a suggestion: pull out the plug, get rid of Capitalism, its industries and poisons, States and their environment monster-ministers, ants’ nest-cities, their anxiety of technological control, social noxiousness and the impossible lives it produces, the paradox of unlimited progress and limited resources and the millions of lives it feeds off, in a word the end of techno-industrial society. A radical answer to radical problems. Proposals that are frightening, real, but how much more frightening is, if we just think about it, the life they are offering us in this world of poisons and the end we’ll come to when their promises crash in front of the inevitability of climate change?”

– *Bologna Capital of the Environment: the Monsters are Coming to the City, the City Looks Even More Monstrous*

By shadowbanning complexity as “wokeness,” what emerges for Read is a position that: climate change is an issue of singular and unprecedented importance; it is too late for mitigation at scale, and we must focus increasingly on adaptation; we must work within existing institutions and infrastructure towards the goal of “net zero”; to gain traction the climate movement needs to build solidarity across the political spectrum, even at the expense of marginalized groups.

Read’s vision is politically salient. **But to what end?** At what scale? To which “majority of people” is his moderate flank ultimately crafted for? “The primary audience for the present essay is English-speaking countries across the world...” he writes. One can perhaps surmise that this is likewise the primary operating space of the green politics he envisions – extending maybe into other parts of Europe or even more broadly throughout the “developed world.”

Were climate change a singular issue of atmospheric

long time: 500 years, maybe. It’s going to outlive me by a great extent. Will my family’s descendants even be related to me in any kind of meaningful way by 2514? There is so much more Styrofoam on Earth right now than there is Timothy Morton. [G]lobal warming has the properties of a hyperobject. It is “viscous” – whatever I do, wherever I am, it sort of “sticks” to me. It is “nonlocal” – its effects are globally distributed through a huge tract of time. It forces me to experience time in an unusual way. It is “phased” – I only experience pieces of it at any one time. And it is “inter-objective” – it consists of all kinds of other entities but it isn’t reducible to them.”

THE RED FLAGS OF JUST STOP OIL

carbon, and were mitigation/adaptation merely a question of reducing emissions, Read's call to action for mass movement solidarity via workplace net-zero-oriented organizing⁶ and "think of the children" politics might make more sense. But, a climate movement that disengages with social justice as what Read calls "narrow-minded purism" in order to appeal to a broader base ultimately reveals a deeply black-pilled⁷ strategic parochialism.

Perhaps the unspoken reasoning is a view that sees a technocratic managerial "green capital" approach backed by Western hegemonic institutions as the best or only viable form of agency capable of addressing climate at scale; even if the form it takes implicitly means the ongoing prioritization of life – and lifestyle – in the "Global North" at the expense of the "Global South." Read's stance on immigration⁸ suggests a certain level of comfort with this arrangement. And, the reason it is worth engaging with Read at all is the very real possibility that this trajectory (or one like it) will gain traction, if not majority support, amongst the audience he is addressing... relatively capitalized libs in the Global North.

Collapsology is ultimately a form of futurism. Here, the object of concern is what futures might emerge from mass movements that attempt to decouple climate breakdown from the power relations that drive it, particularly in the context of resurgent nationalism and escalating volatility [*ed. – see **Lies of the Land***]. There is a real risk that they may trend inevitably towards "lifeboat ethics," leveraging the urgency of crisis to justify triage. Reducing the complexity of a systemic problem can be an effective tactic to orient action for the purposes of organizing. But as a strategy, obscuring the problem will not solve it.

Although, it can certainly **make it worse**.

6 The point here is not to devalue workplace organizing. The power of labor is real, effective, and important (and, perhaps inconveniently for Read's vision, *radicalizing*.) Again, the issue is one of form-taking and trajectory, which in this case is compressed under the singular and nebulous goal of "net-zero."

7 *ed. –* Right-wing memes over the last decade have frequently used imagery from the film *The Matrix* of choosing between a red or blue pill, i.e., between their ideas or those of their opponents; neo-Nazis and others more dedicated to ethno-nationalist and/or misogynist murderous attacks (see **Calling It Terror**) have instead spoken of having nihilistically swallowed the black pill in following that path, being disillusioned with what they see as the ineffectiveness and lack of results other activities.

8 web.archive.org/web/20180203201804/https://theecologist.org/2014/jun/19/love-immigrants-rather-large-scale-immigration

[*ed. – Continuing our collation of pieces reflective of deep concern from previous generations of radicals with the new wave of climate movements and organisations (see the supplement for **Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics**), here's one about Just Stop Oil (JSO), submitted anonymously to Autonomy News.*]

I've sat on this for a while, knowing just how defensive the organisation can be, and that speaking about this will probably end up being a lot of mental labour. I'm feeling the need to say ~something~ about what Just Stop Oil are up to in the hope that others who have concerns will speak up to.

– Something I overheard in a Just Stop Oil talk recently (one of many red flags to follow) was the sentence "We aren't here to talk about interesting ideas or to have conversations." Firstly, I'm trying to work out if this is something written into the standard JSO recruitment (yikes) talk, or if this person in particular is just a bit boring? **And more importantly, the attitude of not wanting to learn, or to improve, or to hear feedback is actually a bit dangerous, and this is reflected through the experiences people are having in the organisation.**

– To position yourself as uncritiquable and unquestionable, as an organisation, is dangerous. Yes, it means that, as an organisation, you can pretend to have the moral high ground. But JSO don't have the moral high ground. None of us do. We are all learning. We all need to learn. We are an ecosystem, we are connected, and we need to network, share ideas and build communities to support each other. If your goal is ultimately to send activists to prison, it is extremely irresponsible to alienate them from their communities.

– The rest of the talk was mostly about their tactics (which we can talk about another time) and an info dump about the severity of climate breakdown. **"This bit of the talk is designed to scare or guilt people into action. We need people to join us."** – **overheard this directly from someone in JSO walking someone else through the structure of their talk.**

– JSO have purposefully neglected to inform people participating in actions about injunctions that are in place (meaning minor crimes like crim dam [*criminal damage*], or supporting and encouraging an action can carry higher legal risk and potential prison sentences) [*ed. – similar in this aspect to Extinction*

Rebellion; see *“The Arrests Aren't Happening Quickly Enough”*].

– They have put (mostly young people who are new to direct action) in very dangerous positions. The power dynamics surrounding age and experience in the organisation are really worrying. I've seen older men who are notorious for picking up youngsters and throwing them into direct action they aren't equipped for try to do exactly that. When you've not known a great deal of stability in your life, there's not a lot you can say when a man from JSO vaguely offers you a flat in London, and all you have to do is get nicked a few times over.

– I've heard rumours of them purposefully excluding more experienced activists, and those who raise concerns about well-being or consent. If anyone can build upon this, or has differing experiences then say please say hi (get in touch at goldiloxxx@protonamil.com if you feel like I'm wrong about this!)

– After the talk, the individuals who had spoken seemed pretty disappointed that they hadn't gotten as many recruits as they'd expected. We heard them criticising the folks who they'd spoken to for not being willing to risk their liberties for the organisation. **“She's a mum, how can she not care about her children's future?” is a pretty grim misinterpretation of someone saying no thx to joining an organisation that uses the scared general public as cannon fodder.** Shame is not a good motivator. Pressuring people into actions they don't want to do is bad consent.

– The sheer amount money that has been thrown at this organisation is ridiculous. Actions with 70K budgets?? Just think what communities could do with that money ten times over?? Not saying they should give their cash away, but whoever is calling the shots on how it is spent clearly does not have their priorities in order. Roger Hallam's¹ strategy of begging millionaires for money so he can use to pay for the traumatisation and imprisonment the next generation of activists is working better than any police infiltration we have

1 ed. – Founder of Extinction Rebellion, as well as the political party Burning Pink; known for lines like “if you're not in prison, you're not in resistance.” More recently, prone to play on right-wing troupes of mass rape, slaughter and starvation as immanent due to climate collapse; without, of course, mentioning the rape culture, engineered starvations present and past (see **Return Fire vol.2 pg87**), and endless wars and resource extraction which are the very basis of the power held by institutions he appeals to for protection and seeks to join.

seen in the last decade [ed. – see *'The Position of the Excluded'*].

None of this is to discredit the hard work of individuals trying to move JSO in the right direction from inside. We are all scared about the state of the world. We are all doing what we think is right, but this doesn't override our responsibility to keeping each other safe, and our responsibility to be accountable when shit goes wrong.

If you're getting involved with direct action, if fatalism is your vibe, if you think you can withstand burnout then power to you, but please be mindful of power dynamics, of your own health and wellbeing, and of your responsibilities. If you think you're too busy, or important, or there's not enough time to read about burn out, then that is a big ol' sign you need to do some reading about burnout and to look after yourself.

So can we please get some dialogue, some education around basic consent, and some accountability culture in this organisation before anyone gets any more traumatised, or someone literally gets killed?

Sorry there's no photos or flashy artwork to go with this. I'm tired. I just got off the phone with a friend who has been royally fucked by Just Stop Oil. Rant over.

“The catastrophe is the daily dose of poisoning which we drink voluntarily: the world of management, entertainment, democracy, technological progress and merchandise. Its power source is human drudgery and submission, turbo-charged by fossil fuels or no-less-ruthlessly exploited 'sustainable' resources. This is the polluted wasteland which takes survival for as long as possible its miserable horizon – at an individual level as much as at the level of the species. In the past, struggles against the most polluting developments have been orientated by ecology but now it is acting as a brake on their potential. The fumes of ideology can be more suffocating than greenhouse gases. If we are not careful, we will be led directly into the embrace of a transformed authority – eagerly drawing on the moral fury of the green movement, and all too happy to continue to govern on a necessarily planetary scale.”

– invitation for a discussion at Touchpaper anarchist library, London, 21.03.23

EARTHBOUND FARMERS' ALMANAC & FOOD AUTONOMY IN BULBANCHA

[ed. – This concerns the publication in recent years of the *Earthbound Farmers Almanac*, and the project of some of its producers, Lobelia Commons. The latter is interesting in that it grew as a mutual aid project from out of a specific struggle (that against the sad legacy of pipeline atrocities in the Gulf South of the so-called United States; see *Return Fire vol.1 pg28*). Yet, despite the tendency of such projects – important as they are – to become pacified (see *Return Fire vol.5 pg10*), the focus here is on strengthening a base from which subversion of alienated social relations not just grow but spread, and strengthen the struggles in turn which birthed them. (Figuring out how to perform such a trick – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg59* – is a key challenge for radicals, especially in the Global North.) Moreover, when talking of realising commons (see '*The Principle of Reciprocity*') and gift economies (see *Return Fire vol.5 pg53*), Lobelia Commons highlights the importance of joyful projects that nourish us. For more great examples of anti-authoritarian projects blurring the line between sabotage and so-called "self-sufficiency", see Peter Gelderloos' *The Solutions are Already Here* (also regarding themes mentioned here of connecting rural projects with cities and vice versa, to avoid the more isolating parts of each.)

The Final Straw Radio: Could you all please introduce yourselves with any relevant information that you'd like to share: who you are or where you are, preferred pronouns, etc.?

M: I am M., I use he/him, and I am in southwestern Mississippi at the moment, but I bounced between southwest Mississippi and New Orleans, aka Bulbancha.

B: I am B., they/them are my pronouns. I'm also bouncing back and forth between Mississippi and New Orleans.

Hadley: And I'm Hadley and I use they/them pronouns. I'm also bouncing in and out of New Orleans. But I'm located west of New Orleans, I live in a project called the Ndn Bayou Food Forest. That is a propagation and free plant nursery.

TFSR: Cool. Do you mind if I ask a couple of clarifying questions? Can you talk about that food propagation project a little bit, Hadley, anything you'd want to share, any way that people can learn more about that? Sounds pretty cool.

H: Yeah, totally. It actually grew out of the campaign against the Bayou Bridge pipeline. And folks may be familiar with its earlier incarnation, the L'eau Est La Vie [*Water is Life*] camp. In that same location,



basically, after the pipeline was finished, which was rerouted around the camp to avoid the conflict, but currently runs next door to the Food Forest. **This is the fourth year of it as a farm project, basically, and the goal was to take this land that had started as a point of conflict against petrochemical infrastructure in the Gulf South and then pivot from that point to looking towards some regenerative future.** We found that the strategy that we could do with this place was to just use it as a little base to propagate as many fruit trees to give away as possible. So a lot of the trees that Lobelia Commons, which we'll also be talking about, plants in New Orleans, are propagated here, or another rural space that we'll probably talk about also.

TFSR: There's obviously, depending on how close you are, blowouts from pipelines are a danger that's one of the things that has brought people into the streets or into the swamps, in this case, to block the construction of these large pipelines. And also, they tend to leak. Are there any fears of that? Or have you been trying to work around that in terms of propagating food plants in that area?



30.10.16: anti-Bayou Bridge pipeline-themed floats set alight (see 'Each of Us Picks Our Own Mischief')

H: Oh, yeah, it's definitely a concern. Thankfully, we aren't particularly near to a valve station, or a pump station, which is where the majority of smaller pipeline leaks happen. If there were to be a major blowout all we can do is hope that it's not in the little section of the 165-mile pipeline that we're at. But we do also understand that we're surrounded by a lot of other pipelines too that definitely are a lot older, and probably are leaking a little bit in different places. But that's the nice thing about having a propagation nursery, too, is we're sending out trees, and then hopefully, I think we do have good soil, but even if we sent out a tree that had grown up with a little bit of oil on its soil, it's gonna get hopefully put into a healthier habitat later.

TFSR: Cool. And for listeners who maybe aren't familiar with the geography of the Gulf Southeast, can you all who are traveling back and forth between Mississippi and New Orleans say a little bit about... Is there much distance between those two places? Are they pretty similar biomes?

M: Part of the reason why we're there is the geographic proximity, but the difference in terms of drainage and elevation. And especially just generally in the Gulf South, any amount of elevation really matters in terms of the type of storms that you experience, what flooding looks like, just the general potential inclement scenarios you could find yourself in.

Where we are is about an hour and a half north of New Orleans, and New Orleans is between 10 feet above sea level and 10 feet below sea level, and where we are is around 300 to 400 depending on where you are. So it's a pretty dramatic shift even though 300 feet about sea level is not really obvious that much, but ecologically, it's quite different. And that's largely because of that elevation. So the forest types is, like, pine, oak, hickory/piney woods area. We're in the very southern and what's called the Pineville, historically was like long-leaf, pine forests, pitch pine. So harvesting turpentine and growing pine for lumber and that continues on today. So historically, it is quite poor soil, very acidic, as opposed to New Orleans being a lot more flat, not having a ton of agricultural space in the area immediately surrounding it. And largely because of the logistics that go into literally just reclaiming that space for development.

TFSR: Yeah, we're here, among other things, to talk about the Earthbound Farmers Almanac. Can you talk a bit about the project, and how it got started? And what people can find in it?

M: The Farmers Almanac started a little over two years ago, I think, this is our second printing. And we finally started as a little bit of a haha joke, "Wouldn't it

be funny if we type thing", but then we liked the idea. A lot of the projects that we'd come up with in Lobelia Commons have been experimental "what if" ideas that then we took seriously and saw what we could do with them. That's the story of the Almanac at least for me. What I've been inspired by is just how it's grown and other people have taken to it and it's an open-ended thing that people can obviously submit to, but also has been a way of meeting people through... We put out on social media that if people want to distribute it, they can and just basically pay at cost, sometimes we just give them away, and they pay shipping. Then they can use it as a fundraiser if they have some food sovereignty project or local neighborhood initiative like that. Sometimes there's a rural garden center, book club thing, or just giving out to a bunch of rural friends or what have you. So we've made a lot of connections, and I think other people have made connections through distributing it, which is definitely something... I think that we thought there was potential for that but I don't think that we expected to have the impact that it has.

TFSR: How has it grown from issue to issue? You can only see that scale, I guess, because you said it's a second issue. How has it changed? And can you talk a bit about the content of it?

M: I would say it's more robust this time around, I think there are so many things that you can put into an almanac. If you look at the ones you would find at a grocery store, there's everything from like horoscope to recipes to the moon calendar, maybe growing tips, and some weird Christian stuff, and some weird funny stuff. It's all over the board. So, as a project, the possibility sometimes can be very overwhelming. I think the first issue, we did a good job of trying a bunch of stuff and trying to be like "Oh, we should do this, we should do this, we should do this." But we're all doing this as volunteers and definitely not making any money off this. So we were stretched pretty thin. But what's nice about this most recent issue, the second issue is that I think other people took to that and started submitting things that are elaborating on that idea of what reference material can you include, what's a comic that can be done for it, different ways of writing for it. I think it's more filled out. It's maybe even a little bit longer, maybe 15-20 pages longer than the last one, but it feels denser or richer. And we also printed a lot more of them and are hoping to distribute them more widely, both regionally – regionally, we distribute in garden centers and some friendly nurseries, various local businesses throughout the Gulf South – and to friends around the country and actually even outside of the country.

H: Just to add on to that a little bit. I think one of the things that are really clearly grown in to the second

issue – and I’m excited to see how it develops into later issues – is that the reference section is just getting more and more filled out. And we’re reprinting things from the previous year, there was a really nice comic strip from last year that explains fruit tree propagation with nice little diagrams of how to cut the branches and everything like that. And we reprinted that and a comic on banana propagation and also have a lot of just new resources like maps that show some of the shifting hardiness zones are growing zones throughout the US of where the coldest minimum temperature is and how climate changes change that and things like that. For me, doing stuff around the garden, I’m actually starting to have the Almanac around to reach for it because it’s like “Oh, the seed germination temperature chart is going to be really useful for this, the soil chart is going to be really useful for that.” Another thing that we filled out a lot more this year was historic dates and things like that, and the calendar section to add more reference points of a global radical history of struggle around food and land and stuff, which is obviously an incredibly huge topic that covers struggles literally all over the world, but we tried to at least have more little entry points or just citations of things for people to get excited about and then do more research.

TFSR: It says in the editorial statement that not all the contributors and editors are a part of Lobelia Commons. But for those who are involved with that project, can you tell us a bit about that collective and its relationship to the so-called New Orleans? And could you repeat the indigenous name for the territory that somebody referenced, I think it was M.?

M: Bulbancha. Lobelia started pretty much right when the pandemic hit. It came out of the swelling of interest and mutual aid. A number of us had started in the New Orleans Mutual Aid Group. And that grew out of this pre-existing food share. Basically, there wasn’t food coming in from the port that was providing the excess with which that food share existed. Then the project basically was buying bulk from Costco as many mutual aid projects around the country were doing. NOMAG, as it became known, really just got a ton of volunteers, so many people lined up for that. A number of us who were involved in starting also were gardening and doing weird stuff with mushrooms and whatever, just nerding out about plants and the logistics of what allows New Orleans to exist in its contemporary state. So we just started like “Oh, let’s just do our own thing about focusing on food autonomy.” Because we’re clearly

missing something.

If a pandemic hits or if some severe crisis hits, the experience of New Orleans tells us a lot about FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] and that the state is really not coming. If the state does come it looks like huge lines, like a food bank like that, or just these poultry things. So how can we start to chip away? **What does experimentation look like in terms of really fundamentally relating to food and place differently than we are raised or taught to?**

We’ve done a number of projects, and a lot of things have just not stayed the test of time, had failed. But we started with a plant delivery service, basically. So, when people were delivering groceries, we were delivering plant starts, then when we no longer felt as necessary to do the delivery thing – also, that was a ton of labor for no real reason – we basically just started promoting what we call the decentralized nursery, which is a newfangled name for something that people already do throughout the world.

Basically, if you’re starting some plants for your garden, just start a few extra and put them out in front of your house and give them out for free to your neighbors. So we tried to encourage people to do that a lot. A lot of people started meeting their neighbors and maybe a punk house, living in a Black neighborhood, some white punks who had never had good relationships with their neighbors for a number of reasons suddenly are talking to their neighbors.

And there’s starting to be this breaking down of a colonial line over this meeting point of plants.

And we went on to start a number of other projects, maybe one of which that’s still going on is this mycology club which started as we call it the Mushroom Collaborative, but upcoming this week we’re doing an inoculation. But the idea is basically just to learn with each other about how to produce mushrooms, learn how to identify mushrooms, and just do foraging walks. We meet every now and then and we’re open to people joining. It’s a very caring space, people bring coffee and doughnuts. Usually, someone brings some critical reading about

mushrooms, or fungi generally.

It’s been a great space and the project I’m most excited about within that group is to form what we’re calling a mushroom commons and to basically inoculate logs with shiitake, or lion’s mane or reishi, and basically hide them around some of the parks in the city, and that people could then start to forage in the urban setting.

Hadley, maybe you want to take it on?



H: Yeah. There are definitely a bunch of other little projects or initiatives that I could speak to that are more of the things I've been involved in. **Because one of the things that are really nice about Lobelia is we always intended it to be a very decentralized thing that doesn't feel tied to one particular space within the city, it's not tied to one particular activity or even gardening, specifically.** We want to imagine it being a much larger range of whatever people are excited about doing. For example, I haven't participated in as much as I'd like because I'm out of the city. I missed their public days sometimes, the Herb Commons group has been really cool, where it's a bunch of people with a lot of skills around herbalism, who gather different things, or they'll put the call to the larger group, and those of us who are growing herbs can contribute some of what we have or some of what we're harvesting wild and send it to the folks working on the Herb Commons stuff. And then they go and do a pop-up tent in a public park or along a walking path, and have informational materials and lots of different herbs for people to try and take home and learn about, including fun activities. I went one day, and they were teaching people how to dye clothes with mulberry dye, and also just giving away all these herbs and everything. And that one's really cool, because it's also a nice way, if people don't want to go do the public herb commons thing, they can engage with it more on the level of being a gardener who grows many herbs and sends it to the Herb Commons. Or they can have that more active communal interaction with them.

The one that I put a lot of my time into maybe, as I already mentioned, is called the Front Yard Orchard Initiative. That is basically just the goal to propagate and, if we can fundraise, to buy cheaply as many fruit trees as possible and give them away to people, and help people plant them if they want that help. Ideally in the front yard, but we aren't actually strict about that, if people have a better spot for the tree in their backyard and we know that they're going to share it with their family and their neighbors. **It's still a contribution to the overall food commons that we're trying to create.** Through that, we've been propagating and giving away and planting well over 100 fig and mulberry trees. And then lots and lots of other trees that are a little easier to come by – banana, moringa, things like that. And also trees that we have to fundraise and buy, we've also been giving away a bunch of citrus and pecans. What's been also really nice about that has been just getting connected with other young farmers in the city who were excited to also help give stuff away. Because it's one thing to grow 200 trees, but then try to go out and find spots for them all... We've just been handing them off to

people and they've planted well over 50 in neutral grounds. For folks who aren't familiar with New Orleans, the neutral ground is what you refer to as the green, grassy strip between two one-way streets, which are really common, they're all over the city. People are walking along them and a lot of time it's where you park your car if the water is going to be high. We've just been planting a lot of fruit trees through that project.

The last one I'll mention right now is just a little informal, harvest crew or a harvest group where we just let each other know and keep track of different things that are just already growing in the city that don't get utilized. There are just so many fruit trees that are sometimes in wild and cramped spaces, or sometimes they are in front of businesses and they don't get utilized. So we just go out and pick a lot of figs and loquats, and mulberries and try to have some collective processing of those things, to save them or give them away in some way. That one has also just been really great to get people noticing the place that they're living in a little bit more and developing a relationship with the place.

There's this one particular park near the place I stay at in New Orleans that they just recently clear-cut all these beautiful elderberries and mulberries that we used to go harvest from. Now we're starting to think whether or not we need to start paying a little bit more attention to the local neighborhood association politics over other terrible stuff that is happening in that realm.

B: I wanted to bring up a project that we've been involved in, which is working with our friend who is a neighbor and a Black elder community member, she's a Black mama, her name's Miss Althea. Her roof and her house got very damaged in [Hurricane] Zeta and then continued to get pretty severely damaged during [Hurricane] Ida. We've just been working with her and MADR [Mutual Aid Disaster Relief] and NOMAG to get a roof on her house and to try to eventually get solar panels and just see how far we can go with getting her set up so that she continues to be able to support her community in the ways that she has been for many, many years. **We've just been talking about the cyclical nature of disaster relief, and how short-term it can be and spring up immediately after a disaster, but the longevity of that is just pretty short-lived. We are trying to sustain that because we're living in a**

disaster, and we're going to be constantly coming up against these things. So, creating situations and supporting people who are already doing the thing to be able to continue that so that we're not constantly one foot in one foot out, we're firmly facing each thing as it comes along. And we're prepared for it.

TFSR: Concerning that work that you're mentioning and also the example earlier that was given of the white punk house that started relating better to Black neighbors by sharing plants and having a thing in common and literally sharing the means of survival in a lot of ways... New Orleans, like a lot of other places around the country that particularly have large populations of color, have a lot of history of gentrification. And I've heard lots of stories of white punks, for instance, moving into... I grew up in the outer Bay Area, a lot of my friends decided to move to Oakland because housing costs were inexpensive. While they were not personally responsible, they definitely contributed to the displacement of Black and brown populations that have been living there generationally. Building those sorts of connections sounds really important. It's awesome that you all are working with that elder. And I guess another part of that, too. These are thoughts that will lead into a question...

I've seen and talked to people who have done mutual aid projects. And I don't know the ethnic and racial makeup of your group. But in a lot of instances, it's a lot of white folks who have some extra time and maybe a few resources and can do mutual aid, often distributing stuff into Black and brown communities and poor communities. And while it's a cool project that sustains people and takes off some of the pressure of racialized capitalism from folks, it isn't necessarily able to bridge the gap between charity and mutual aid. It doesn't bring folks in and also allows itself to be shaped by the people who these folks are living beside, and who are taking advantage of the project.

You've already given one good example right now with your neighbor who you're helping with her roof, which is great. But I wonder how Lobelia deal with, for instance... Is it mostly white people that are coming and picking up the plants, are they putting them in their yards and increasing the property value of their neighborhood? And I don't know if y'all are from New Orleans, even. **Have you had any insights or experience of making that branch between moving from charity into a mutual aid project that can not only help sustain people but also contribute to an oppositional force, strengthening the communities against capitalism and gentrification?**

M: Yeah, I think there's a lot of obviously really good stuff there. Lobelia itself was definitely started by people who fit that description, largely white, younger, mostly transplant and have a little bit of extra time because almost all the projects were funded basically with unemployment and stuff. So that definitely fits that bill. And I think that where we've put our focus is moving away from that charity thing. A lot of people say this and don't actually mean it. Probably everyone who's been in Lobelia, it's a "funny thing" because people come and go all the time, so there's not really a membership per se. But the people who do stuff that gets called Lobelia, we've all probably done mutual aid that is effectively charity. And we all know that that feels terrible. It's super draining. **Honestly, most people that are involved with doing Lobelia activities are pretty generally over activism [ed. – see *What is Insurgency?*], or at least critical of activism in some way.**

So most of our energy is localized, it's where we are pretty much. The decentralized nursery is an example, that's something that just relates to your neighbors, we're not meeting up and being like "Okay, where's the most marginalized group that we can go support?". If there's a group that reaches out to us that's maybe doing that work and wants a bunch of plants for whatever reason, wants a garden – that has happened in the past, and the Louisiana Seafood Worker Alliance, the past two years, we've given them between 50 and 200 Roselle hibiscus plants, but we're not like organizing in that way. **We need to eat and our neighbors need to eat. And we want to talk to our neighbors and have strong connections with our neighbors. That comes from not this idealistic or selfless thing. In some ways, it's "I want to have fun when I'm doing this."** And oftentimes, it's very joyless to just seek out how we can do the most good. That's largely why we've been rooted in specifically where we are. The relationship with Althea is probably the greatest articulation. Some of us have known Althea for seven or eight years. Some of us were eventually pushed out of that neighborhood. But they still keep up very strong relationships with a lot of people that continue to live there, or were forced out of that neighborhood as well.

TFSR: This isn't so much meaning to be directed at you all individually. Because I know there's a decolonial lens that shows up frequently in the book. And I think that it's important to talk about that and the difficulty of navigating being a part of a settler-colonial society and that settler colonialism is an ongoing project and not one that's passed, which is the thing that the book points to. So I am wondering when people talk about infrastructure projects, if you have thoughts about how that relates to settler-

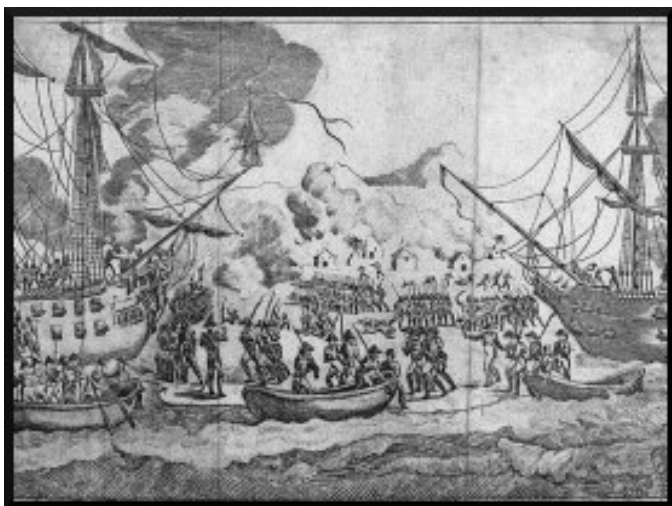
colonial society?

H: Yeah, I might have a rambly answer to it.

TFSR: It'll match my rambly questions.

H: I think there are a lot of different aspects to how to approach it. A big part of it just has to do with history and getting acquainted with the history of the places that we're in and making sure we keep those things present in a way. Here at Ndn Bayou, we grow some sugarcane. And I feel like there's no way to grow sugarcane and have people here and give them the tour here and talk to them about the sugar cane that we grow, we have it as a visual barrier. But you can't grow sugarcane without talking about the history of slavery and the way that plant was so integral to the whole colonial project in so many ways in this region, and sometimes people talk about New Orleans as the northernmost Caribbean city. We're very close to all of that history. So when I talk about growing sugarcane, I try to teach people, if they don't know about it already, people who are visiting the farm, talk about the Haitian Revolution and talk about CLR James' *The Black Jacobins*, which I try to recommend to people, we have it in the library here.

And I tried to get people to read from it or talk about the history of the way James describes the enslaved people in the northern plains of Haiti at that time, who were, in some sense, one of the earliest industrial proletariats in the world, because they lived in these huge camps with hundreds of people working these huge body-destroying mills. As soon as they had the opportunity, they chased all the slave owners into the cane fields and lit the cane fields alight, and burned them alive there. I think we need to come at it from a sense of we are coming from a settler-colonial society, some of us, but we just need to be clear about which side we're on to some extent, and in this space, in particular, because of our having been rooted in this struggle against this pipeline that was led by indigenous people, we have a bunch of



1801: French military expelled from Haiti by slave revolt

very direct relationships. So we can actually very easily be sending stuff here to our friends on the rez in the southwest, not to be specific about that place.

There are various forms of support that we can give having this place, and just as a refuge for people to come through lots of different things like that. It's definitely not that easy for people who are just trying to have a relationship to land and a land project or inside a city like that. They don't already have those connections. It can feel weird to be "Okay, well, I don't want to be a settler here doing my garden project. So I need to go out and find the most public-facing, Indigenous organization to go meet those people." It just has a top-down looking at the world, like a map-colonial viewpoint almost even to just approaching things from that way sometimes. So I don't have clear answers for people in other contexts.

M: I think that's why our focus on the connection between these rural farms in the city is so important, because, aside from obviously just doing an isolated thing, having that connection is what literally makes, say, a farm in the rural south or anywhere, for that matter. **That's what makes it having that connection is what makes it actually become counter-infrastructure, something that can be used more widely and for partisan ends.** So, having those places and the connections and having it be social is what allows for establishing these flows. I think it's important to encourage familiarity with the place as people come and visit these various farm or rural spaces from the city and vice versa, to encourage familiarity while maintaining an openness to potential discomfort that could come there.

And there's actually a piece in the Almanac called "Beyond the Levee". It talks a lot about this historical counter infrastructure or maybe infrastructure against the state in the colony. That obviously took place in the form of maroons most famously [ed. – see '*All That Wildness Names*'; *maroons existed not just in Jamaica but across the so-called 'New World'*], but also in other forms of desertion and fugitivity and at times insurrection. **The piece ends with this imagining of a not-so-distant future where state infrastructure has collapsed to a further degree than we already currently experience and how those histories can be honored and lived as a means of survival and preserving dignity.** I think it's important to consider the potentials that developing these types of counter-infrastructure and the social world that they create and are a part of can aid and abet some future fugitivity and other types of movement that might become necessary as the state infrastructure continues to literally collapse, especially in the form of levees and floodgates. So, I think with respect to food autonomy and its

relationship with those infrastructural projects, it's just completely necessary. It's absolutely critical to the functioning of those projects, to the point that it's no longer an activist activity. It's the lifeblood and provides many avenues for imagination and experimentation inside those projects.

B: I feel like, in some ways, it relates to your question about "mutual aid" or what is often charity in certain capacities, but I guess, for someone who's a white settler to know the answer to that question, I feel like is problematic. **For myself, in these projects, there needs to be an acknowledgment of not knowing and not decide that this is like the way it needs to be. Or [not] in this position where we're isolated and we're going out into these areas, and we know what's best, and this is how we're going to plug in, but being in community, I think, is one of the best ways to dissolve that, or to challenge that and to challenge oneself. Because you're opening yourself up to asking people "What is it? What is it the community needs? Are the ways that we're able to plug in?"** Based on, for example, asking Miss Althea what she needs or what she wants, rather than deciding for her. That extends itself to indigenous communities where it's like "okay, there's no way that I could know if I'm not in a community with indigenous comrades." I think the first step is to be connected and also to be receptive to criticism and change. Being open to that, I think, is the biggest part of that.

M: Yeah. I'd add a little bit that being guided by humbleness and willingness to learn is critical, because a lot of the stuff that we're doing, say, here in southwestern Mississippi, we're largely producing mushrooms, raising tree crops, and have a prep plant nursery. And these aren't novel ideas by any means. We're just doing the means of both subsistence and survival for countless people for basically since humanity has been around, in all sorts of different forms. **To pretend like we have some excellent idea that you see in some more permaculture circles, for example, that we need to proselytize or bring to the poor people who can't figure it out. It's just a totally backward way of thinking.** Just being innocuous in a way, or doing your thing quietly. And then when it's time to show up and support – if you're a settler – Indigenous comrades, or Black comrades or worker comrades, or just your neighbors or your friends, show up with the capacities that you've built. Because there's nothing that you can do that will make you not a settler, but your relationship with the land can change based on how you choose to live in relation to it.

H: Also, just while we're on this topic, I wanted to clarify that our collective at Indian Bayou includes



several Indigenous people, it's a combination of Black and Indigenous and white folks here.

TFSR: Cool. Those are all really good answers. I appreciate you responding.

Living in Asheville, as I do, over the years I've seen a lot of little shops pop up that are homestead-themed, they play with this settler concept of going back to the land: I am wondering if you have any ideas about how projects like yours can contribute to a countering to things like cottage core,¹ or another niche, capitalist re-visioning of what it means to live in relation to the land?

H: We are definitely very anti-cottagecore. There's a lot there. I'm not sure quite where to start.

M: We were just laughing about it a second ago, because I feel like we go back into the city and we're constantly labeled cottagecore.

B: Like bringing baskets of mushrooms into the city people are like "Yeah, that's what you are."

M: I guess we can address the question with respect to some back-to-the-land thing. I actually also don't exactly know what #cottagecore is.

B: Yeah.

TFSR: Me neither. I was hoping that someone else could describe it... [laughs]

Do you think that your project or that it's an interesting thing for your project to engage with the idea of going back to the land in the American imaginary of homesteading and independence and individuality, that gets reproduced in things that I've experienced as being part of cottagecore? If I look at the hashtag on Twitter.com, mostly, there are a lot of images there, and there's a lot of focus on aesthetics. And, again, aesthetics are not bad. But when people prioritize aesthetics over actual engagement and the relationship between themselves and the land, or their health, or their autonomy, or their neighbors, that falls into a trap that capitalism provides. How do you think food autonomy projects can sharpen their teeth? Because I think that food autonomy is a really important challenge to capitalism, as well as to the individualized alienation of capitalist existence.

1 ed. – Born on the internet (and largely existing there, rather than in the complexity of actual rural life), an aesthetic heavily leaning into traditionally-patriarchal historical settler-colonial family life on the farm.

H: Well, I do think that the aesthetic of cottagecore is definitely something that needs to be attacked. I have been thinking about it a lot recently, about the ways that this really polished, “everything must look beautiful,” everything is presented for Instagram? It does tie into this weird obsession with purity and cleanliness, and this traditional whatever-the-fuck. I feel like there has always been this undercurrent in a lot of hippie counter-culture. But since the pandemic, I feel like its potentially fascist qualities of that obsession with purity are really becoming clear or clarified to me in a way.

I don't want to veer too much into talking about the pandemic instead of talking about food. But I'm hearing the same sorts of people talk about how they're not going to get the vaccine, not that I would tell anybody to trust the vaccine or the pharmaceutical companies in particular, but saying they're not going to get the vaccine because it's going to make them sterile, and it's going to make their body impure. You hear that from a lot of the same hippie types, who would also say things like “Oh, we can't grow a garden in the city, the city is dirty, the city is contaminated. There's lead and all these toxins everywhere.” It's true, there are a lot of toxins in the city. There are also a lot of toxins in rural areas, and people end up turning it into this moralizing thing, which is also obviously coming from a completely inaccurate place, whether you're talking about the vaccine, the soil, or anything, everything is contaminated. We are contaminated. Contamination is a good part of our lives, we're full of bacteria that are not ourselves, or they are ourselves [*ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; An Attempt at Interdependence Storytelling/Worldmaking***].

So obviously, the purity thing is a fantasy, but it is just scary, honestly, the way it's coming up to the surface in some ways now. I don't have a clear answer of how to address it but I do think that in some ways, the Almanac is intended as something that somebody who's in that mindset can pick up and not be immediately turned off to, but that can start to complicate and challenge some of those views.

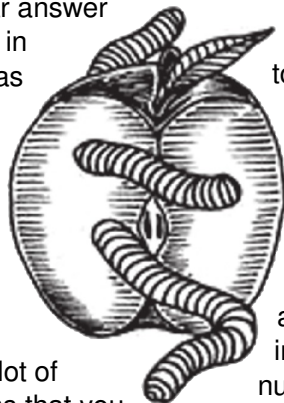
M: I think being on the mushroom farm, I think we probably have lots of thoughts about contamination. And a lot of the gourmet and medicinal mushrooms that you would buy at a grocery store or farmers' market are produced in these super sterile environments indoors. And definitely not going to knock them, since some people were involved in our project who grow like that, but there's this constant policing of the space and disciplining of the space that is absolutely related to aesthetics. Any disturbance is really

noticed, there's a conflict anytime anything is entering that space, and our attitude here is quite a bit different because we produce mushrooms outdoors on logs. There are molds everywhere, sometimes there are molds on our mushroom logs that we want in the soil, and the trees are growing. It's always contradictory. And the way out of that is through it, you need to promote diversity from the perspective of someone who is a fungal partisan is to, in some ways, increase contamination, different kinds of contamination, and create more fungal competition and more fungal communion. Again, not to come at these indoor mushroom facilities, we hope to one day also be able to have those kinds of facilities, because they definitely have their place. But there's a definite distinction between the laboratory and the home space, and the laboratory and the school and any other public space, and a lot of that policing has been gendered labor. That comes through with a lot of stuff that Hadley was talking about, in respect to that being very appealing towards a politics of purity or white supremacy, fascism, hetero-misogyny, and, on forth.

B: Yeah, I used to go back to some of what you're saying about the commodification of the image of nature. As it relates to back-to-the-land mentality, or cottagecore, whatever, homesteading aesthetic, and I guess something I'm noticing in this conversation is just the constant thread of connection and trying to break down the severing that happens when a commodity is created or is maintained in the public eye, through social media, as a representation of what it's supposed to be based on what is the most marketable.

It's difficult, right? Because if you're trying to run a mushroom farm as a way to sustain yourself, there isn't a certain element of having to play into that, where you still have to sell the mushrooms at the end of the day. So I think that we all have to still participate in these systems that exist. I'm new to Lobelia as a project, but I feel like part of what I'm seeing in Lobelia, and part of what I want to continue to see is a continued connection between the city and rural areas. That's what Lobelia seeks to do in a lot of ways, I guess, maybe that's one of the main pitfalls of the idea of back to the land is that it feels very isolating, and it also feels in line with prepping or individualistic or the new version of having a nuclear family and moving to the suburbs where it's severed. So trying to reverse that severing, to continue those connections.

H: Yeah. Just to piggyback on that idea is that a distinction between food autonomy and isolated food production. And I think food autonomy is inherently a very social thing and something that's directed towards a communing or commoning or sharing that



a lot of the back-to-the-land thing or this macho “I’m going to move to this cabin and produce everything that I need to sustain [myself],” which is just totally ahistorical, sounds extremely lonely and not at all what should be considered food autonomy. That’s as a solo project.²

TFSR: Yeah. And I think it would probably have less inherent adherents, or followers online if it looked a little less like Tom of Finland³ a little more like Ted Kaczynski⁴ because that’s probably what you’d look like if you were sitting in a cabin by yourself for 20 years.

M: Exactly.

H: When we’re talking about the pitfalls of the homesteader mentality or the back-to-the-land movement, I think what M said about self-sufficiency being this ahistorical myth that never existed on the household or family level, in any agrarian land-based society, I think that’s a good place to start. And obviously, also, there are a lot of things that need to be addressed with settler nostalgia or the nostalgia for American settler culture that seems to be a part of the homesteading that some people are trying to do. Those things are very present and are a huge problem that needs to be addressed in the larger movement or the larger wave of new interest in growing food and getting more connected to the land.

2 ed. – “What we truly need in this war against civilization, this war for our lives, is not to break off relationships but to create more abundant relationships. We do not need communities with pretensions of self-sufficiency, living off the product of their own labor, hacking their means of subsistence out of the womb of an inert and passive earth with the sweat of their own brow. We need communities that ridicule the very ideas of labor and property by reviving reciprocity, cultivating the gift, and opening our eyes to the worldview that these practices create. [...] Instead of a closed circle, the gift is a subversive invitation to abandon capitalism and the worldview it inculcates. This is true whether the gift is a basket of tomatoes from your garden, mushrooms or calendula you have gathered, a day spent measuring and cutting doorframes for a neighbor’s new house, or an afternoon taking care of a friend’s children. [...] Rather than fleeing the cities, going back to the land in a mutiny destined to self-isolation and failure, the practice of the gift allows us to return to capitalism’s terrain – and all the people held captive there – with forms of abundance and sharing that encourage further struggle” (Against Self-Sufficiency: the Gift).

3 ed. – Touko Valio Laaksonen; iconic homoerotic artist.

4 ed. – Imprisoned for the long series of letter-bomb attacks of the 'Freedom Club' against US technological enterprises and scientists, Ted Kaczynski’s supposedly 'self-sufficient' solo lifestyle in a Montana cabin and writings were an important influence on radical ecological and green anarchist movements in the '90s onwards. These days, his writings (while sharp on technological society – if very much suffering from focusing on that alone – always having contained conservative elements) have enough ambiguity that, despite his own protests, it is the radical right who are mobilising his ideas to their own ends.

But at the same time, I don’t think that they’re really new or surprising concerns for anarchists or people who listen to this show. We aren’t trying to have just a bunch of self-sufficient nuclear families. We don’t have any reverence for settler culture. In fact, for those of us who are white, if we find any inspiration or affinity with white people in early colonial history, it is only those people who were fully defecting from settler society and were welcomed into Native society [ed. – see the companion piece to *Return Fire vol.3; Colonisation*] or who were otherwise complicit in the struggle of Native people against colonization and were assisting that in really material ways.



And similarly, I don’t think that we really suffer from the same strategic delusions or missteps of the back-to-the-land movement in the 60’s and 70’s, in which case, a lot of people were trying to just drop out, and their projects became isolated and weird in different ways. There is a general understanding now, certainly, among anarchists that our projects need to be conflictual, they need to be part of these larger struggles, we can’t escape climate change, it’s coming for us wherever we are.

So there’s like a lot of really material things I think people should be thinking about to try to avoid that isolation. Because it can happen even with the best of intentions if you get just too involved in projects that keep you facing inward and you’re just biting off more than you can chew with the land itself, or what you’re trying to do with it. Distance and gas prices and the jobs being nearby or not – all of these things are factors that matter when we’re trying to figure out and cultivate the flows in and out of these spaces. The flows of people and resources that are needed to

sustain a project and the people involved emotionally, physically, financially, socially, etc.

That's going to look really different in every context.

But just a general framework or an idea that I found useful is this concept of the "captured garden." The standard example of a captured garden is from the height of the coal era in Appalachia when people are living in company towns, where the coal company controls everything. In a lot of cases, people were actually required to have a garden so that the mine owners didn't have to pay people as much because they knew they were growing their own food. This stands in sharp contrast to just a generation or two before that, when growing food was something that gave people more freedom and autonomy and bargaining power when it came to dealing with the coal companies. If the wages were too low, you could just go back to the holler and grow food on your little plot of land and also have this large ecological base to draw from around, this forest and hills that everyone was using as a commons to graze their animals and hunt and things like that. And by the time of the company towns and the captured garden, a lot of that had been destroyed and taken from people. And so the captured garden is this example in which growing our own food has become this thing that is no longer contributing to our autonomy, but it's contributing to our subjugation.

I find that to be a really useful framework, if we try to transpose it a little bit onto the modern era, just ask ourselves: "Is my community garden contributing to autonomy and giving people more ability to live their lives and have successful struggles against their bosses and the state? Or is it a captured garden?" With a rural land project, if an uprising comes along, and you're too tied down taking care of the chickens every day to be able to go into the city, maybe in some ways that is functioning as a captured garden for you [ed. – see *'Our Anarchy Lives'*]. Obviously, there are lots of other ways that a well-positioned project could have really useful interactions with those conflicts.

TFSR: Thank you. Those are really insightful answers to a totally convoluted question, but you got what I was trying to communicate.

How can people get a hold of the Earthbound Farmers Almanac? How can they learn more about Lobelia Commons and maybe get involved or contribute to either the projects?

M: The 2022 Almanac is finally out, it was late three months because of a paper shortage. People can get it, if they're trying to buy an individual copy, or a couple of copies, they can support the project. All the money goes back into the printing of the Almanac, which we're still very far in the red, it all just gets paid

out of pocket and we owe a bunch of people a bunch of money. So they can buy that at emergentgoods.com. They can also find us at @LobeliaCommons, on both Twitter and Instagram. There we have more information about stuff we're up to. We're also posting the Almanac, pretty much the entire thing, in social media posts over the course of the year. And if anyone is interested in distributing it, or starting a book club, or maybe selling it at wholesale, or sticking it in the free little libraries, coming up with some way to use it or use it as a fundraiser, they can contact us on social media or lobeliacommons@protonmail.com. And we're definitely looking for folks to contribute to next year's issue, we are going to have the deadline for that is July 31 of this year. Feel free to reach out, and send us pitches, you don't need to come up with a whole piece, you can send us an idea, and we will answer as soon as we get it. You can just put the "2023 Almanac" in the subject.

TFSR: Thanks again for having this chat. I look forward to putting in an order myself for a physical copy of it. I'm sure that Firestorm [Books] will carry it. So I will just grab one from over there.

M: Yeah, we actually had to send some, I don't know if we did last year,

B: To Firestorm.

M: Oh, wait, you probably dropped it off.

B: No, I just put it in the Transmission Prison Project book stack. So it went out to folks at TPP but not Firestorm.

TFSR: I bet people'd really appreciate receiving some of that stuff on the inside. That's awesome.

B: It was so cute. Because immediately after I dropped them off, someone texted me and was like "I was just reading a letter that had a request for an Almanac." It was like perfect timing. Super cute.

M: Yeah. I have many pen pals in Angola [prison] in Louisiana. And we sent them to a few buddies in there. There's this crew of guys who meet now and then and they talk about gardening and stuff and apparently, they're super hyped on it. That made my year last year.

B: That's the best.



'EACH OF US PICKS OUR OWN MISCHIEF'

[ed. – A 2017 interview conducted by itsgoingdown.org regarding another interesting outgrowth of the anti-pipeline campaign mentioned above, that also focuses on conviviality rather than activism. It took place over five years; remarking on its demise, some participants say: "All traditions are born, flower for a while, then die. Some persist across generations, some fall into quiescence and later rebloom anew, but most simply wither and are gone. It's ok for things to die; in fact, it's inevitable."]



'Mischief Night' refers to the long history of rebellious proletarian revery that has occurred throughout the ages around the time of Halloween. In the following interview, someone talks with people in New Orleans, LA, who for the last four years have taken to the streets to celebrate, and in turn discusses the history of the holiday as well as how people are taking it into an anti-political directions. This year marked the fourth annual New Orleans Mischief Night Parade. Last year's rowdy and daring procession down Canal Street ended in a bonfire and the defacement of a racist artifact (rest in pieces). The theme this year was the Bayou Bridge Pipeline, and the parade ended in a large black snake float burning in effigy on Frenchmen Street. Following Halloween, we caught up with some true Mischief Night revelers for an interview. Here's what they had to say...

Why did you guys take the time to make another parade specifically for Halloween, especially such an involved and risky production? What is the relation of Mischief Night to this particular holiday?

Orca Chomp: If you're not familiar with the history of Halloween or how its customs have evolved in different eras, it's worth looking into.¹ But in the present tense, commercial holidays – all of them – flatten the most powerful affects – stuff like Fear, Love, Hope, Grief, Community (I could go on...) into safe units with safe and usually passive public traditions.

But all that stuff is important to us, not symbolically but actually important, vital, so we want to engage them in a different way. Actually, we need to. Especially fear. The world we live in has become a nightmare. It's endless. The places we live are crammed with the most horrible bullshit and then it gets normalized in just a couple years. None of these things were being

confronted to our satisfaction in other Halloween traditions like costume parties and big dazzling spectacles, so we had to make the Halloween that we need to exist right now.

Right, you've described elsewhere a sense of an imperative to "collectively build a more combative spiritual practice." But why bother?

OC: If public traditions matter at all or have any consequences for the people who are in them or who see them, then they need to reflect what we actually feel and want. Being pretty isn't enough for a lot of people. A halloween costume that's a cynical joke about Trump or whatever is more sad than funny. To be stuck in that kind of flat, empty mode of passing through the morbid death holiday just bums us out even more. If we're going to be out in public, we want to be out as ourselves – people who don't want to put up with the way things are or the way things are going.

It's crucial and non-negotiable for us to have public traditions that are beautiful, that make us happy and where we get together and move through the real world actually confronting the things that actually scare us, and confronting them in the way that's intuitive for us. Passively respecting the nightmare world around us as it stands... isn't intuitive for us.

What was this year's theme? How is the theme determined each year?

OC: I said earlier that Mischief Night is about confronting fear and confronting the things that scare us. We haven't come up short yet thinking of something disturbing – maybe it's been hard to know where to start. For instance, so there's this project going on where these nihilist lunatics are trying to build an oil pipeline to connect Louisiana to this certain other oil pipeline

"There is the great, vast, brooding, welcoming and blood-stained land, beautiful enough to astonish and break the heart. The land seems nearly to weep beneath the burden of this civilization's unnameable excrescences. The people and the children wander blindly through their forest of billboards, antennae, Coca-Cola bottles, gas stations, drive-ins, motels, beer cans, music of a strident and invincible melancholy, stilted wooden porches, snapping fans, aggressively blue-jeaned buttocks, strutting crotches, pint bottles, condoms, in the weeds, rotting automobile corpses, brown as beetles, earrings flashing in the gloom of bus stops: over all there seems to hang a miasma of lust and longing and rage. Every Southern city seemed to me to have been but lately rescued from the swamps, which were patiently waiting to reclaim it. The people all seemed to remember their time under water, and to be both dreading and anticipating their return to that freedom from responsibility."

– No Name in the Street

1 ruinsofcapital.noblogs.org/the-devils-night-2

built last year up north [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg16*]... Which has already leaked how many times? Three to date? Crossing 700 bodies of water and eminent-domaining people out of their land and for what? We all know where this is going. We all know what's about to happen here. In spite of all different kinds of people fighting it in all these different ways, we've all seen what tends to happen. What it will probably come down to. Everyone knows... And in the back of our minds we're partly thinking about it all the time. Those are the types of things that come up when we pick a theme.

But why a parade?

Flamingo Pox: Being in the streets gives people a sense of power over their lives and community. Being in the streets isn't always enough, though. Protests and marches often fall short in terms of the connectedness, vitality, and collective strength we're looking for and need. This is part of the sad amputation of politics from the rest of life. Whether or not it's intentional, in most activist circles we've known, things such as resistance, strength and joy can only overlap in the most contrived ways, if at all. But we need the overlap of all these things in order to have a chance of developing any substantial counter-power.

Lots of traditions, too many to name, have always known this. In New Orleans, we've found the strength-joy overlap is more often found in parades than marches. Dancing atop buildings and cars, chasing off the police with bottles for trying to arrest someone, torching someone's four-wheeler because they recklessly drove through the crowd and could've killed someone, all while dancing, singing and partying – basically until the Ferguson solidarity marches in 2014 [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg 76*], such instances of real agency and happiness were things we'd only ever witnessed here in parades.

How do you see your parade in context with Carnival's history or traditions?

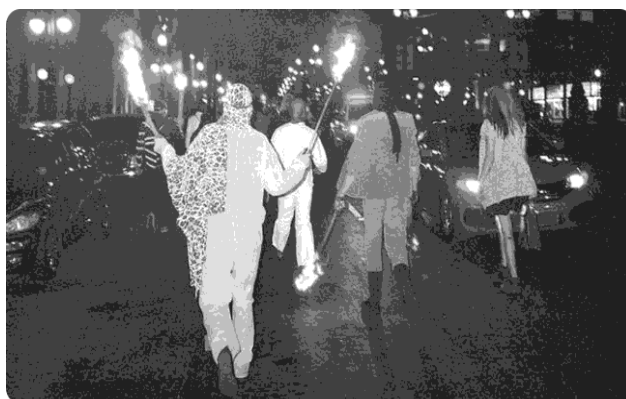
“Boys should collect alms for the respectable poor, instead of mad pranks, throwing stones and making floats.” – Crusading Monk of Florence, 1490.

FP: Mischief Night is a breakaway of breakaway, but we recognize a concrete history that dates back centuries. Our Carnival traditions are those that actually want to “turn the world upside down.” There's always been a push and pull between popular ways of celebrating and ways that established powers would like us to party and parade. For instance, the emergence of the Grand Krewes¹ was an explicit reaction to elite fear

1 ed. – Krewes organise the individual parades that make up the famous annual Mardi Gras. The Mistick Krewe of

of popular revolutionary violence on the eve of the Civil War. Walking parades are different than spectacular parades for a reason.

So what are the modern incarnations of this form of holiday?



FP: It is the dirt bike gang doing wheelies light after light down Canal Street with no license plates on a Sunday morning. It is an impromptu post-parade kegger throwing furniture off the roof of an evicted social center turned into luxury condos before pulling the fire alarm. It is launching from the sideline of Muses a full daiquiri

[ed. – popular frozen Cuban cocktail] through the half-opened window of an NOPD mobile command center as it drives by. It is tipping over those top-heavy “Mr. Tippy” spotlights the cops are trying to make ubiquitous during Carnival. It is thinking your parade is the only celebration on Mischief Night, only to find out on the 5 o'clock news the next day that apparently somebody else was out there setting dozens of dumpster fires.

Despite the completely insane extremes of control infiltrating every last corner of the world, our form of holiday, the kind repressed by Grand Krewes, has still never left the scene. Even broken up, these instances have never stopped occurring in the interstices of our otherwise commercially sanitized holidays and traditions. They're rarely recorded as anything but aberrations, because they do not happen within the historical continuum of this runaway train we call progress [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg11*]. As Walter Benjamin watched fascism sweep Europe in the 30s, he put it well:

The awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode is characteristic of the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action. The great revolution introduced a new calendar. The initial day of a calendar serves as a historical time-lapse camera. And, basically, it is the same day that keeps recurring in the guise of holidays, which are days of remembrance.

What are some particular intentions of Mischief Night regarding this pipeline situation or a general trend of “resistance”?

Comus, founded in 1856 by Anglo-American Protestants and French Catholics, is the oldest continuous one; previously were informal and irregular, springing from the Greole Catholic community. In 1991, rather than comply with city council permit requirement to certify that the parades did not racially discriminate, Comus, Momus and Proteus (other 19th century Krewes) withdrew instead.

OC: For lots of people, it's not enough anymore to "demonstrate" being "against" something. It's pretty clear at this point that it matters little to powerful parties how many people simply show up to "demonstrate" their opinion, as long as they keep it orderly. Case in point, the climate march, the women's march [ed. – two large, populist U.S. mobilisations during those years]...

FP: These were to the fossil fuels industry and the emergence of Trump what the anti-war marches were to [then-President] Bush:² not even a bump in the road.

OC: But on the other hand, if anything, one of the major valuable things about those kinds of situations is for people to get together and act together. That's a vital thing regardless of the practical irrelevance of your "message" to your enemies. Parading together and confronting the horror that is our transforming world and the city that's already been transformed, this isn't the end-all, but it is just necessary.

Why this year's route and why do things get broken and trashed? What do you say to those who lost business or had to clean up after Mischief Night? How Dare You??

OC: Trash? Trash? Did somebody say trash?

FP: More trashing is what the world needs – there's so much trashing to be done! We need judicious trashing, and more bonfires too. What we don't need is more business. Reality is not a set of economic relations, no matter how many apps and entrepreneurs find ever more subtle ways to valorize the human experience [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.3; Caught in the Net*]. And insofar as economic relations now account for a lot of what passes for human connectedness, it is always at our expense, forced upon us over of centuries of the most extreme dispossession [ed. – see *23 Theses Concerning Revolt*]. All economy is manufactured scarcity. All economic relations are separation. And separation is the reason this world is shit. The only way to head off this disaster is with disruption – that is why more trashing needs to happen.

Sorry-not-sorry to the business owners and their admirers on Frenchmen. We recognize the necessity of doing business just to survive in this world – but when another world roars into existence just feet away and for a moment wrests space from the market, we recommend moving towards and not away from its warmth.

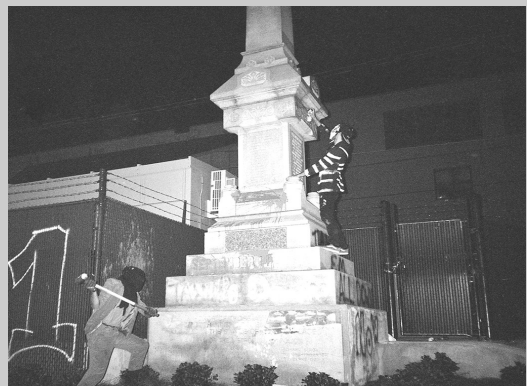
Like other walking parades, Mischief Night entails an informal flow of people jumping in and out of the procession. How do you envision the relation of participants to spectators? Is this even important to you?

OC: It goes without saying that the parade is the people

2 ed. – Reference to the historically-large (and historically-pacifist) demonstrations across the world in early 2003, which completely failed to prevent the Western alliance from invading Iraq.

who bring the parade. That's the old-old form of parade. What's a little more uncommon in this time of big "protest" marches is being able to open up something that isn't like a march or demonstration, and also isn't entertainment or intended to be symbolic or cathartic. Instead you have the bulk of people making choices about what they want to happen, and shaping what happens, so that anything can happen. Of course everyone gets to be in the street, that's just basic, but what we love about Mischief Night is that each of us picks our own mischief.

Of course, there are lots of people around these days who would rather stand aside and film instead of parading. If that isn't you, come party with us next time.



30.10.16: white-supremacist Battle of Liberty Place Monument damaged & graffitied with anti-pipeline slogans, despite police and State Trooper presence; the latter are then charged with burning floats by paraders, leading one to flee the scene entirely

"Will we parade like Day of the Dead did this year, in a compliant straight line cordoned off on all sides by police escorts, while denying ourselves the power to fight for the living? The old argument, that beautiful fatalism is just how we do things in the Big Easy, has been thoroughly discredited: even at the time these pallid paraders were marching to the End of the World, students at Dillard were battling the cops protecting neo-Nazi David Duke's "right" to speak at an historically black college. [...] It's a reality that even the most self-obsessed rituals can and must confront – we must attack the forces of oppression directly or else become merely the appealing backdrop against which the enemy celebrates themselves, the very "cultural currency" with which our city is pimped. There is no longer a middle ground; that's been seized for luxury condos. The choice is stark: we either collectively build a more combative spiritual practice or we collude in ceding our ritual spaces of encounter to the oppressors. [...] Let's instead let urgency give new life to our holidays, to our memorials, to the carnivalesque – a life that knows how to fight as much as it knows how to live." – *Mischief Night Parade Breaks History*

'IT IS STILL POSSIBLE' [France]

In May this year [2022], the anarchist prisoner Alfredo Cospito was transferred to the 41bis isolation regime [ed. – see *'Our Anarchy Lives'*]. The torture method of sensory deprivation aims to break his rebellious spirit and silence him. **In order to obtain the removal of his isolation conditions, our comrade started an unlimited hunger strike on October 20.** On December 1 – on the 42nd day of his hunger strike – a review of the conditions of detention decided to continue the torture process. If the Italian fascist state persists in its practice of isolation, Alfredo may not see the end of this year. But his death will not be a suicide: it will be a murder under torture by a vindictive political judiciary.

Let's Stop This Assassination

The most passionate form of revolutionary solidarity is to continue the struggles for which our compas [ed. – see *23 Theses Concerning Revolt*] are behind bars. It was in this spirit that on Sunday December 11, during a night-time sabotage action, we went to a pylon of the Fessenheim-Paris EHV (Extra High Voltage) line and unscrewed the bolts. The pylon is still standing, but its structure is clearly compromised. **Let our revolutionary anger act in alliance with nature, and let a winter storm do the rest!**

Alfredo has always been able to link the question of social revolution with that of ecology and, through his words and deeds, to connect the ecocidal plundering of our planet with the struggle against the dominant powers, exploitation and oppression. In his statement on the shooting of Italian nuclear industry leader Roberto Adinolfi (Ansaldo Nucleare) in the knee [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg79*] and later in various statements during the process of the Scripta Manent case [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; Sentence of Anarchist Prisoners in Scripta Manent Appeal Trial*], he described the need to anchor a revolutionary perspective in the anti-nuclear movement. In a valuable contribution to the debate, he also spoke in 2018 about the struggle against the CIGÉO project to bury nuclear waste in the French village of Bure in the Meuse. Referring to the idea of diversity of tactics practiced there, he suggests an intensification of the forms of struggle chosen. **This is one of the contributions that were later used to justify the tightening of his detention conditions.**

As such, we wish to take up this idea and pursue it by following the thread of informal organization and permanent attack on all the dominant infrastructures which, in our opinion, have already put us in a cage for perpetuity. And this without dissociating ourselves from strategies that harm the physical integrity of the targeted people, as Roberto Adinolfi might have done; not with a strategy document made up of empty words and pompous revolutionary phrases, but through the practical application of direct action.

The power line we attacked was not chosen at random. It is precisely the 400,000 volt line that will in future supply electricity to the useless and counterproductive CIGÉO industrial project. At the same time, close to the Cigéo site, the public network operator RTE is planning to build a transformer station on an area the size of 20 football pitches,

which will be able to satisfy the nuclear monster's thirst for energy. This summer's Declaration of Public Utility creates all the legal conditions for the expropriation of the land necessary for this purpose.

The sabotage of a high voltage line is not without danger and, even if it is done without error, there is always a certain risk. However, we found this risk acceptable and the action entertaining. Since direct action is always an attempt to motivate and inspire other contexts, some technical advice:

Choice of target: When choosing the mast, make sure that the insulators (the ceramic coils to which the cables are attached) are vertical! A diagonal or horizontal position indicates a tensile load in the corresponding direction. Choose the most insulated location possible. Make sure that there are no people between the object and the nearest towers (e.g. busy roads crossing the line). Choose your escape route so that it cannot be blocked by the falling line.

Risk assessment/mitigation: It happens regularly (although rarely) that electricity pylons bend or fall, even without sabotage. This can occur, for example, due to storms, the weight of snow, or simply material fatigue or inadequate maintenance. The result is a risk of premature tilting of the mast. This risk increases with each screw loosened and exponentially with each foot completely unscrewed. It is up to you, as a group, to decide how far you want to go. In all cases, plan the action with the possibility of the mast falling while you are still there. Both at the base of the mast and where the cables touch the ground, there is a potentially lethal tension on the ground within a certain radius! Move away from the object as quickly as possible in the opposite direction of the fall. Ensure that your body remains in contact with the ground at all times (grounding), walking with small "shuffling" steps. Make sure that the weather conditions are favorable. Under no circumstances should you perform this action in strong wind, heavy rain or snowfall!

How to proceed: During the reconnaissance of the object, we noticed with some annoyance that the thread projections of each screw were destroyed by drilling. An anti-sabotage measure of RTE which we do not know if it applies to all EHV lines or only to this one. In retrospect, we can see that it is certainly more tiring, but that it is still possible. For the screws, we concentrated on the ones that connect the mast to its foundations (50mm key). On the inside, a short handle of about 20-30 cm is enough, as it gets stuck in the structure of the foot. On the outside, you will need a strong tube extension to increase leverage. For ease of transport, it is recommended to use several tubes that fit into each other. For some screws, we needed up to 2 meters of leverage. Before the actual action, we sprayed the screws with penetrating oil (WD 40) and let it work for several hours. We repeated this operation at the beginning of the unscrewing. The last few screws were significantly more difficult to remove, which we interpreted as a sign that the mast was already starting to lower. For this action, you will need at least 2 to 3 people on the object. You can count on about 3 hours per foot (16 screws at a time). If you find a pole with undamaged bolts, it will probably go faster.

Tracks: It is almost impossible to work for several hours in

the same place without leaving many tracks! Check regularly during the work if your body is still completely covered (e.g. between sleeve and glove). In any case, get rid of your clothes and shoes after the action. Keep your workplace clean and store your tools in such a way that nothing is inadvertently left behind, even if you have to stop the action before it is completed.

Alternatives: since our intervention, other actions of sabotage of high voltage lines have taken place in France. In Salindres (Gard), a pylon whose line feeds an ARKEMA chemical plant was sawn down on 21.12.2022 [ed. – see '*Nature Defending Itself*'] and in Vitrolles (Bouches du Rhône), a few days later, two fires under an EHV line caused power cuts at the Marseille-Provence airport and at AIRBUS Helicopters.¹

"These arsonists have also put an end to the rumor that a burning electric pole is beautiful, but it does not cut off the electricity!" reads a summary published on nantes.indymedia of the action, for which there is to our knowledge no responsibility claim. We would like to dwell on it a bit: according to us, there are basically two different methods to effectively sabotage an EHV line by fire. The first is to attack the mast itself by fire. For this, the metal structure must be heated to more than 1200° C for a certain time. A normal fire is not enough! In order to damage the steel in its substance, it must be brought to incandescence, as is the case when forging with charcoal and a huge supply of oxygen. Once heated in this way, the stability of the steel remains compromised even after it cools. This is what happened, for example, during a THT sabotage in the southern Meuse region in 2017. To liquefy the metal and thus make the pylon collapse, a temperature of about 5000° C is required, as would be the case for example with the use of thermite. The other method, which was probably used in the present case, is to generate an extremely high flame, which goes from the ground to the cables. The fire has the property of conducting electricity and can thus cause a short circuit. This results in an immediate power failure, but the damage to the structure is relatively small.

We were particularly pleased with the detailed description of the action in Salindres (Gard), attached to the statement. Although this method has been used successfully hundreds of times since the 1970s, we opted for another method for safety reasons. In other words, we simply did not dare to pull down the mast! We are fully aware that the statement we issued early on increases the risk that the damage will be discovered and repaired in time by RTE. However, the priority of our intervention was – in this case – to support the struggle of our comrade Alfredo, which required a public communication.

*A loving embrace across seas, borders and walls.
For all prisoners in struggle!*

Solidarity means attack!

**Rage, Transmissions & Riots
Service of Disconnections of Pylons of All Kinds**

1 actforfree.noblogs.org/post/2023/01/01/vitrolles-bouches-du-rhonefrance-the-sabotage-of-high-voltage-lines-cuts-power-to-the-airport-of-marseille-and-airbus

'OUR ANARCHY LIVES'

[ed. – The following was one installment of a three-part interview with imprisoned anarchist Alfredo Cospito (see **Rebels Behind Bars; Sentence of Anarchist Prisoners in Scripta Manet Appeal Trial**), published sequentially in the Italian-language paper *Vetriolo*. He has made various contributions to that publication, like others, though some do not make it past prison censors; over which Alfredo has previously gone on hunger-strike. November 2021, the Italian State launched Operation Sibilla, and various anarchists were charged with incitement to terrorism for the following interview (among other things), all copies discovered during the searches being seized.

Regarding Alfredo's current hunger-strike (see '**It Is Still Possible**'), entering its bitterest stages as these words are written, it's useful to locate it in years-old struggles from behind the bars by him and his comrades. The strike (previously joined by other prisoners in Italy, Greece, France, the UK and Chile) is just the most recent of a wave. In 2019, one started from the female AS2 high-security section of L'Aquila prison (to secure their transfer to another prison and the section's closure). Despite ending without success, the long strike spread to three more prisons, sparked solidarity acts outside, and included daily banging on the bars from sympathetic inmates in L'Aquila's harshest regime after the AS2; the 41bis units.

Alfredo ended that hunger-strike unwell; he'd needed a ruptured gallbladder removed for months, which the prison was obstructing, and ended up in emergency surgery after the strike took its toll (followed by a pancreas infection). Yet his spirits were high and his contributions continued. After the Operation Sibilla raids, and his charge with terrorist incitement, Alfredo was himself put onto 41bis regime.

41bis (previously used against mafia and communist guerrilla prisoners) aims to isolate the inmate at the highest level yet attempted in Italy. Let Alfredo's co-convicted, Anna Beniamino (herself having joined him for a good part of his strike until now), explain: "Torture in white gloves based on physical, sensory and intellectual deprivation, on the severing of friendship and sentimental ties: one hour's visit per month, through glass, with family members often forced to travel hundreds of kilometres to carry it out, with relatives and loved ones often seen as the very associates of the 'association', with all that this entails in terms of estrangement; heavy limitations on study and reading, which alone could protect the individual from cerebral 'shutdown', with a lucidity already tested by the lack of confrontation and minimal socialisation, in a quasi-isolation that is prolonged for years, often for life; newspapers censored in whole or in part, 10 television channels and psychotropic drugs as possible 'palliatives' to perfect the treatment."

Theoretically only applicable for four years at a time, in reality the only way to get out of 41bis is to repent and cooperate with the authorities. **Torture, in other words.** Comrades in Italy have not missed the significance of the moment in which this tool has been brought to bear on anarchists, as in the call for a national meeting last July: "This is at a time when Capitalism and the world order it established after the Great Wars are undergoing restructuring both at the level of production processes and resource extraction, and at the global

geopolitical level [ed. – see **Capitalism & Electrification**]. We know that this process will not be painless, and that like all crisis phases its costs will be paid by the poorest and most marginalised sections of the population.

Protests and social turmoil are already foreseen, which is why states have been organising themselves in advance against this eventuality for some time, striking hard at the still combative fringes of the now dead revolutionary movements. From Greece to Chile, from the USA to Germany, governments are taking countermeasures against anarchism, seen as one of the greatest dangers to internal order.”

It is for the abolition of 41bis (for all prisoners) that Alfredo has put his life on the line. The comrade has been active since the late '80s (imprisoned then for refusing military service). His vision here (which we share a great part of, if not all), testifies to his determination and commitment; at what cost, remains to be seen. (Moves may be afoot to enable force-feeding by judging the comrade 'insane', but even that may come too late.)

“In the struggle for meaningful existence,” wrote some of Alfredo’s informal confederates in Bristol (claiming an action – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg27** – targeting companies such as military supplier Selex, part of Italian giant Finmeccanica, days after Alfredo’s action leading to his arrest called for attacks on Finmeccanica subsidiaries – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg79**), “‘freedom’ and ‘life’ are things worth the risk of losing in order to truly win them.” The gamble isn’t over yet.]



*Analyzing the history of the movement of the exploited, of the poor, oppressed and proletarians, we see that anarchist ideas are born, nourished and developed in these contexts; on the other hand, most of the anarchists also come from there (of course there are also exceptions). These ideas were born mainly during the birth and growth of industrial capitalism (indicatively from the early 1800s to the 1970s), and up to 40 years ago, the organizations of the exploited and of the workers are mainly mass and the anarchist groups (and the individuals who are part of them) are also the fruit of that historical era. With the advent of capitalist restructuring in the 1980s, followed by a drastic change in the world of work, even anarchist action and organization undergo changes; to the classic organizations of synthesis (or mass), the less rigid structures, based on affinity and informality, are opposed. The new technological restructuring, based mainly on robotics [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.5 pg9**] will obviously lead to other drastic changes (mass unemployment) and the new proletarians will probably be employed in moving goods. In this context, in which the impoverishment of the proletarians (and obviously the exploitation of humans, animals and land) and the wealth of the exploiters will increase, does it still make sense to talk about class struggle? Are there still margins to involve – in the struggle for the destruction of this techno-industrial civilization – the exploited, the*

proletarians, the excluded? Should we try or renew forms of organization for struggle?

This question starts from logical assumptions by making the organizational method depend on external conditions. But, for us anarchists, it is not all so simple, linear and logical because, not being “politicians,” in our case, the “means justify the ends,” not vice versa. Consequently, if capitalism “restructures,” it must not change our way of “organizing ourselves” because it is in the means we use that our anarchy lives.

Our luck is that the anarchist practice of informality and affinity groups has never been as close to reality as it is today. Paradoxically, we were not the ones to adapt to reality; it was reality that adapted to us. The reality has run towards us, making our practices extremely effective, which over time have become the ideal to unhinge a complex and chaotic system like the one we are forced to survive in today. Only a simple, extremely reproducible and equally chaotic, elusive and adaptable practice as informality and the affinity groups can do it. These ways of “organizing” are not an adaptation to the “capitalist restructuring” of the 1980s: since the time of [Carlo] Cafiero and his “propaganda of the deed” [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg84**], they have always been at the base of anarchist action, so much as to characterize our organizations of synthesis. **Within each anarchist synthesis organization that was posed in a revolutionary manner, there were in fact affinity groups that acted informally, often indicating the way to go and rekindling the action.**

It is also absurd to think that the class struggle is over; we are immersed up to the neck, but unlike yesterday the barbarization due to the technological isolation (that each of us carries with us) deprives us of the real perception of the phenomenon in its complexity. This barbarization involves a return to primordial, wild (and therefore purer) forms of class conflict. The mediation figures “unions” and “parties” are skipped. In the most technologically “advanced” part of the world, the social subject that once characterized the oppressed class, the “proletariat,” has been replaced by an indefinite and desperate class that has no self-awareness. Meanwhile, hatred and anger have accumulated, saturating the air, making it unbreathable and ready to explode at the first spark of the right intensity. Power is well aware that despite having less than good cards in its hands, it plays them well, fueling conflicts between the poor. **But they are only palliative, only slightly effective.** The unions and left-wing parties no longer work. Their role has been replaced by weapons of mass distraction like racism and patriotism. But how long will it last? The strategy of putting the poor against



the poorest is short sighted. The general impoverishment, due to the technological wave and the consequent unemployment, will defuse racisms and patriotisms, but only if we play our cards well. In the time necessary to settle down and to guarantee to all citizenship incomes, the system will be exposed, almost unarmed, to our attacks. In that time, the hatred will reach its climax and perhaps it will be the right time that in this unfortunate country, the anger will be directed towards the real people responsible for the misery: the State and masters.

Furthermore, the popular madness of sovereignty is undermining parliamentary democracy from its foundations [ed. – see *Capitalism & Electrification*]. This sort of “populism” produces contrasting and irrational thrusts that are difficult to manage for the ones that triggered them. Today, the possibility of our action opening a breach becomes real. We must have clear ideas, conviction and tenacity to change hatred, to open the eyes of the exploited. Will and determination can bring back the clock of history, making us start again from where we started to lose those two irreplaceable qualities. **A century ago we were overwhelmed by the force of an authoritarian “communism” that poisoned us with its fruits, “social democracy” and “dictatorship of the proletariat,” which, with their brutality, brought to the end the “myth” of the social revolution of “the sun of the future” and of anarchy as concrete prospects for total liberation. We argued in our “modernity” that we did not need “myths,” but so we killed utopia, the greatest weapon we had to subvert this world.** Historically we have focused too much on rationality [ed. – see *The Principle of Reciprocity*], on science, neglecting the instincts of revolt, the feelings, the passions underlying the human.

We have lost sight of “the possibility of making it” and this has made us so enraged that we do not recognize, for example, the greatness of the gesture of one of our brothers, Mikhail Zhlobitsky, who blew himself up in the Arkhangelsk FSB headquarters to avenge his own comrades,

tortured by Russian cops [ed. – see *The Vital Space of a State*]. This very young companion has acquired today the founding value of a vital anarchy, ready to play with everything in order to free this world. Things are changing fast; the anarchists are awakening from their torpor. **We are witnessing phenomena unthinkable up until a few years ago, for example the spread of anarchist communism in a country like Bangladesh where the leading role of the working class remains strong. (Incidentally, it is premature to talk about the end of the working class, as for much in the southern hemisphere human labor will be cheaper than that of robots).** We are witnessing the passage from the tragic failures of state communism to the hopes of anarchist communism. An important part of an entire population, the Kurdish one, would seem to have adopted a sort of “libertarian socialism,” ecologist and feminist [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg97*].

Closer to my vision of anarchist practice, the informal trend acts [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg80*], “organizing” itself in half the world through international campaigns called by affinity groups [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg25*], striking like a leopard in a chaotic and nihilistic manner. The air is saturated with electricity, this tension is felt even in this cell. Convinced, as I am, that we are inexorably going towards a “perfect storm,” we cannot afford to put aside any hypothesis of struggle. Much less can we renounce violence in all its nuances and gradations [ed. – see *the supplement to Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics*]. We are relatively few, the time at our disposal is limited, we just have to play our cards well and put aside false moralisms and hesitations. If we want to have at least one possibility, we must be bearers of a more open vision, not waste precious energy trampling each other.

You ask me if you should experiment or renew forms of organization; it would be more than enough if everyone put their planning into practice with



'LET THE FIRE LIGHT UP THE LIBERATION OF WEST PAPUA'

PT Freeport Indonesia (FI) has been present in Papua [ed. – e.g. with *Earth's largest gold mine, one of the largest copper mines, etc.*] for decades since the start of the annexation of West Papua by colonial Indonesia. What PT FI produces is only natural destruction, expulsion of indigenous people, and genocide. We think Freeport's existence can only be destroyed if West Papua is separated from Indonesia, but it is not the formation of a West Papua state that we want, but the West Papua Confederation, people control not state control!

We (Long Live Eric King Revolutionary Cell – Informal Anarchist Federation) send our greetings to Lekagak Telengen, Egianus Kogoya, and other West Papuan guerrillas who are among the lush forests of Papua. We invite our comrades who live in cities to start urban guerrilla units and start attacks on the symbols of capitalism and the colonial state of Indonesia.

We clearly declare our hostility towards the opportunist politician Benny Wenda and other shits at the ULMWP [United Liberation Movement for West Papua] who can live comfortably in a foreign country [ed. – in *Wenda's case, the UK*] while trying to take struggle for West Papua liberation leadership control. True liberation is from the gun and civil insurrection, not lobbies in air-conditioned buildings!

We also don't forget to send our hugs to comrades in Indonesia who are starting a rebellion against the Omnibus Law [ed. – *that further degrades workers, the indigenous and ecologies, and against which anarchists joined in to burn police stations, vandalized State property and clashed with police on barricades in a number of Indonesian cities*] and Joko Widodo's neoliberal regime, to our comrades in Malaysia who have to face repression for fighting the fascist kingdom of Malaysia [ed. – *where cops raided an anarchist social centre in 2015 after attacks on banks and corporations in Kuala Lumpur*], to the YPG-YPJ guerrillas in Rojava who are facing asymmetrical war against Turkey [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg97*], and anti-authoritarian insurgents around the world.

We claim the burning of the labour offices building in the regent office complex of Keerom, West Papua during the riots on 1 October 2020. We are among the masses angry at Indonesian colonialism, this is just our opening attack and this is not the last. Get ready for explosion, that will keep on the track!

If the state and capitalism still exist, peace will never be realized. Therefore, the state and capitalism must be destroyed at ONCE!!

Let the fire light up the liberation of West Papua.

Long Live Eric King Revolutionary Cell FAI-FRI

[ed. – *Eric King: anarchist imprisoned for molotovs against a US politician's office during the time of the Ferguson uprising (see *Return Fire vol.3 pg76*), targeted by screws with torture and white-supremacist cell-mates. FAI-FRI: see *Return Fire vol.3 pg80.*]*



conviction, tenacity and consistency. Whether it is in a social or anti-social perspective [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg38*] or through the informal or specific organization of synthesis or individually, the only discriminant from my point of view (to avoid being an instrument of the reformists) is insurrectional violence. We must start immediately, now to practice it, each according to the intensity necessary for our own planning. A strategy that does not include direct confrontation, armed with power, is destined for recuperation, failure and defeat. This recovery has many names and justifications: “gradualism,” “post-anarchism,” lately Negri and Hardt [ed. – *autonomous Marxist co-authors*] have produced another one, theorising an “antagonistic reformism”. The usual sirens that justify our fears, which feed our resignation, doing a great service to power. To avoid any form of recuperation, it would be enough to act as anarchists. **The atrocities that cry out for vengeance are endless; we must demonstrate with the action that the king is naked, that the master can and must bleed.** In company or alone, hit and aim well. If our discourse wants to become “social subversion,” it is necessary to go back to being “recognizable” and “credible.”

The “recognizability” can be obtained through the risky, clear and direct practice of the claimed actions, with or without acronyms. Or from those anonymous actions that are immediately recognizable for the objectives that strike or for the modus operandi of the action itself. Equally clear and direct can be the anarchist fragment of a procession that clashes with the police force, a blockade, a burning barricade that takes the guerrilla into the metropolis. A circled A drawn alongside a burning barracks speaks as clearly as a claim. **If our goal is that of “social subversion,” communicating with others who are oppressed becomes a priority, and everyone understands who we are and what we want.** Our media, magazines, books, sites ... are not enough. They have a strong meaning in the deepening, in the improvement of our vision of reality, in the strengthening of the analysis, in the knowledge and consequently, in the development of our practices, but they are not able to affect the

curtain of silence that power erects in defense of the "totalitarian democracy" [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg61*]. A silence, that of democracy, made of a deafening noise of endless opinions that cancel each other out. Only destructive actions manage to break through that chatter and through them our words acquire real value, managing to arrive with strength and concreteness. Television, newspapers, radios, sites are forced to talk about it, sending our message loud and clear, even to those who never dreamed of questioning the existing. We are talking about facts and words that reach millions of women and men. It is not absurd to think that someone of them can in this way become aware and become our accomplice. That would be enough to give us one more chance.

The "credibility" is instead given by the coherence between thought and action. For those who approach us, our extraneousness to leaders, hierarchies and sexism of any kind must be clear. **Those who approach our practices must know with certainty that we will never compromise with power and that no one will be left alone to face repression.** The "credibility" of conduct also through the courage and consistency that we demonstrate individually when things go wrong. Once arrested, at the cost of being isolated and crushed by relentless repression, don't give in an inch. But above all it consists in the trust we gain in the field. Who joins the anarchists must have the certainty that we will never betray the word given and that it costs the goals we have set ourselves or we will succumb to it.

"Recognition" and "credibility" will cost us tears and blood and can only be achieved through desperate

'THE TERMS OF LIFE & DEATH'

It appears that on 24th February, something unfortunate happened to the Italian Cultural Institute in London.

At this sophisticated outpost of the Italian state, guests are invited to enjoy a current series of lectures, from handpicked academic experts, on the great social and political issues of the day, with the ambassador in attendance. The previous week, the audience was treated to a discussion of the energy transition [ed. – see *Capitalism & Electrification*], and next week the theme was to be Justice.

All this makes it so regrettable that the building's romanesque facade, with elegant white columns and heavy wooden door, seems to have been soaked in paint by some vandal[s] clearly without the capacity to appreciate such things. Maybe it was some disbeliever[s] in capitalism's 'sustainable' future? Unhelpful people looking to provoke, always making trouble for sensible plans.

It would be a particular shame if the act casts a shadow on next week's lecture. A gathering of cultured and cosmopolitan persons to hear about such a delicate subject as Justice surely calls for a glass of Italian wine and a canape consumed in peaceful contemplation.

Could it be that the irresponsible[s] wanted to pour scorn on the Italian State for its massacres in the prisons during the 2020 lockdown [ed. – see *Capitalism & Electrification*]? Or for its dependable and bloody role in securing the border of Europe against the pressure of irregular migration?

But another troubling interpretation remains. After all, Alfredo Cospito, whose struggle by hunger strike against the notorious isolation regime of 41bis is in its last critical stages, had yet another appeal rejected later that same day, by the wise members of the Italian judiciary.

This struggle, having stirred a whirlwind of action sweeping beyond the walls of the prison, even across national boundaries [ed. – see *'It Is Still Possible', embassy demonstrations in Uruguay and Chile, bombing of vehicles at the home of the embassy's First Counciller in Greece and of the embassy in Bolivia, oil splattered over the Italian consulate in Porto Alegre, arson of an embassy car in Berlin, banners hung at the embassy in Romania...*], is becoming so severe that it is SUPPOSED to have increased the security around diplomatic buildings of the Italian State internationally for some time now.

Whatever the truth, we can be sure that the impulses behind such an act can only contribute to the general atmosphere of indignation and lack of dialogue with power that Alfredo Cospito's struggle, against the terms of life and death set by authority, seems to have enflamed everywhere.

tenacity. Who fills their mouth speaking of "social war" must necessarily take note of it and prepare for war. The time has come to revive the "avenging anarchy," to return to being frightening. As difficult as it may seem, it is necessary to succeed in bringing together the suggestion of the "myth" with the reflection of "planning." Only in this way will the "revolution" return to being a real prospect for millions of exploited people, losing its connotation of "waiting for mature times" that today makes it an empty, enemy word. Through the individual revolt, each of us, in groups or alone, one step at a time, one attack at a time will give new life to the idea of revolution, giving it a concrete, anarchic sense.

Anarchists have historically “intervened in the social,” as we would say today, with clear ideas and necessarily violent actions, in different areas and contexts. In history they have always created fear, terror and concern both to the privileged classes and to every authority, government or institution and, naturally, also to all those revolutionary authoritarian political components. Today, similarly to the level of violence that capitalism puts in place in the permanent war and in the techno-industrial society, the response of rebellion should certainly be greater than it is. However, if on the one hand we find at the social level, citizenship struggles that already start with a certain type of political orientation and also fringes of the antagonism that put into effect logics of recuperation of the social conflict, such as: political candidacy, institutional bargaining, legalization (of squats), authoritarian drifts, peaceful strikes, providing a good base on which the system can count on for support; on the other hand, there is also a movement of radical opposition and living solidarity, despite the fact that in recent years there has been a decline and a reduction in conflict, even by anarchists. What worries most, and from which no one is exempt, is the condition of loss and lack of preparation that returns despite interesting moments and opportunities in some contexts of struggle. Expressions, such as “intervention in the social,” or “real struggle,” have become semantic games, words that can sometimes justify a secular, alternative, associational policy among many. In your opinion, should it not be of interest to anarchists, revolutionaries, to lead and push confrontation and conflict with the State to a desirable level, against private property, with violent means and practices, instead of seeking strategic-political mediators with the legalistic and institutional civil society?

I can only agree with you and answer “yes” to your question. I go further by telling you that the first wall we find to defend the system is precisely these recuperative logics, these “strategic-political mediators” as you call them. Accepting that logic, now that this wall is cracking, is more than ever suicidal. And despite everything, even today, in this period of systemic crisis, too many “anarchists and revolutionaries” fall into the trap without even realizing it. Every time we avoid the street clash because a “communicative” parade was decided in the assembly. Every time during the strike, one submits to the decisions taken by the “base” representatives, avoiding the violent “suicide” clash with the cops. Whenever media is moving towards peace in order to maintain its occupied home or social center, this wall is strengthened. At the base of this reinforcement is the continuous postponement of the violent and armed conflict with the system. We

should find the courage to stand against the majority of our own comrades and take on the responsibility of raising the level of confrontation. Only the angry impetus of individual initiative, bypassing the “rationality” of assemblies can give us this strength, defeating hesitations and fears. But strength and courage are not enough, one must also have a certain lucidity. Despite the opportunities that the times give us, we cannot take advantage of the opportunities presented to us. Our efforts must be dispersed; we are at the forefront of any conflict, street clash; in many cases, it is us with our decision and initiative to strengthen the “movements,” but then the fruits are collected by others. Our message appears blurred; it cannot take flight. It is increasingly our action that makes these movements visible and to strengthen, but what then?¹ It is as if something is missing and that something, from my point of view, is the armed actions that should, in a clear and punctual way, stand alongside, even in different times and spaces, the various struggles, giving more space to our message, to our struggle in the street.



South Africa

'THE VITAL SPACE OF A STATE'

[ed. – A taste of the blow-back created by the repression of the Russian anarchists mentioned above, and a reminder that anarchist hostility to the revanchist Russian imperial project did not begin with Western pearl-clutching over the recent intensification of armed conflict in Ukraine: see *'But It Did Not Stop'*]

We assume responsibility for the grenade assault on the Russian Consulate on Tzavella Street in Chalandri [suburb in Northern Athens] on March 22 [2019].

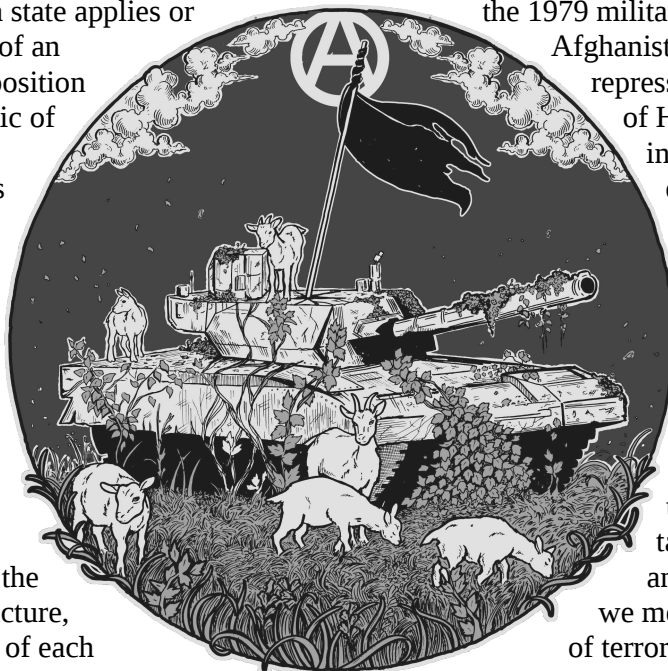
1 ed. – see 'A New Relation with Social Conflicts' for an ulterior proposal in light of this phenomenon; “No one practice is capable of including all the activities necessary for a revolution. We must think of revolt as an ecosystem. If we try to be the only species, we kill the revolution.”

Each state seeks continuity, which is of particular importance both for its existence and for the preservation and expansion of its vital space. We define the vital space of a state structure as a concept that raises every economic and spatial interest. Applying this policy to us is what we commonly call imperialism. This policy is not a strategic choice of a state, but it is indistinguishable from its very existence. Automatically, each state applies or follows the imperialist policy of an alliance in that country. This position comes to overthrow the rhetoric of the holy fellowship of the smaller ones in dynamic states towards the more powerful ones, which the left has been trying to make for years and parts of the anarchist space embrace. Over the years, many alliances have been built up and, as a result, many skirmishes, depending on the interests at stake. Under the veil of these inter-axiomatic contrasts in combination with the economic and political conjuncture, discrepancies in the dynamics of each state are created or adjusted. Relationships between states have always been a dynamic condition that is modified on the subject rather than a static situation.

On the basis of the above parameters, since the middle of the last century, there are two states that have predominantly dominated the world chessboard, the US state and the state of Russia (up to 1991 as the USSR). A common mistake we find in leftist approaches is that these two states are two poles of continual conflict, deliberately disregarding the synthetic (geo) political strategies they have drawn over the years from the division of political influence zones into the Yalta conference in February 1945, as well as political support for military interventions inside Syria. A piece of the same narrative carries a highly unilateral critique of so-called “American imperialism,” while turning a blind eye to Russia’s expansive politics by burying many of the war crimes it has committed. We do not make any distinction between these two states, as we consider our policies equally hostile.

Recalling the Ghosts of the Past

Bourgeois democracy in Russia was established in 1991 after the fall of the communist regime. For so many years, we have perceived a pervasive nostalgia for the political management of the Soviet Union, which seems totally stupid to us because, with the



justification of any political changes to the regimes, some seem to consciously ignore the same power of authority that governs the existence of the state itself. These nostalgists also ignore and often defend the USSR’s expansive aspirations by flushing this strategic choice of a state-friendly country, since they consider it a “red” war to enforce the socialist regime. They have attempted to break the criminal policy of the 1979 military intervention in

Afghanistan, the long-suffering repression of the 1956 rebellion of Hungary, the violent interference and enforcement of Czechoslovakia (1968), and especially the invasion of Poland 1939, where millions of people were massacred in collaboration with Nazi Germany.

Somewhere here we want to point out that when we talk about military tactics and military interventions, we mean the constant strategy of terrorizing and murdering civilians for the more effective

enforcement of the occupying army. It is obvious to us that an army invading another country, apart from the direct frontal confrontation with the rival troops, makes the political choice to spread feelings of fear and insecurity in the civilian population. This is achieved through multiple bombings in various parts of the public domain (often in schools and hospitals), while at the same time destroying production structures with the ultimate goal of physically depriving citizens. It seems ridiculous and hypocritical to read tearful analyzes of the bombing of the US state, while ignoring Russian crimes.

Another tangible example of the practices of this troubled state was the management of relations with Ukraine’s anarchist black army of Nestor Makhno [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg46*]. The then-Communist leadership took advantage of the dynamics and the fighting skills of this army by doing joint ventures against the White Army Nationalists. Then, when it felt that it had nothing more to gain from this partnership, it realized that the ideological and political interests of the two sides were in conflict, since the anarchists of Ukraine did not support the communist model, and the Bolsheviks decided to exterminate them politically, of course. The Communists did not want to allow the existence of an anarchist structure in such a near-spatial field, as they had to deal with their own internal political

opponents. The regime itself had mobilized, for the domestic repression of political opponents of every political origin, the Cheka (an identical organization of the Greek Communist Party's GUN), which initially assassinated nationalists and defenders of the Tsarist regime and later anarchists, Trotskyists, and even Stalinists who chose to disagree with any decisions of the central political line in the name of sociopolitical uniformity and totalitarianism.

Power is “Regenerated”, Rot is Perpetuated

Russia, after the restoration of the free market system in the country and the fall of communist totalitarianism, has evolved into a new type of autocracy with a democratic mantle. To rebuild its economic and political prestige, as expected, it has continued and continues to date geopolitical demands and defending its interests in transnational skirmishes. At the top of the political leadership, the same president, who is faithful to the tradition of Russia, has been steadfastly committed to creating for himself a profile as a leader who is something of a glorious Tsar and a robust general secretary. At the top of the economic elite, there is a powerful class of wealthy oligarchs, which is a new version of the aristocracy. Orthodoxy, conservatism and old traditions have remained unchanged in time, despite the change of regimes and are the pillars of the new seemingly-reborn Russia. These pillars have been well established since socialist times and have been preserved in a suffocating environment of very intense governmental autarchism. The above concepts compose the puzzles of an incomparable social ethics, resulting in the disciplining, apathy and pacification of the most deprived social groups to date. While nationalism and chauvinism dominate the social sphere of Russia; at the same time, every sign of opposition to the dominant norms, every radical expression, every kind of activism, any aggressive mood for power is mercilessly hit by a powerful state mechanism that retains the reflexes of socialist repression. In particular, in February 2018, several anarchists were arrested, tortured and jailed for hanging banners saying “The FSB is the main terrorist” and for participation in Narodnaya Samooborona [ed. – *Popular Self-Defence; Russia's most public anarchist organisation*]. A few months earlier, FSB arrested and tortured 8 anarchists to confess that they were part of the Network [ed. – *anti-fascist group given 8.5-18 years for allegedly planning actions during 2018's election and the football World Cup*]. The craze of state repression to eliminate anarchist action did not stop there. Last

February, 10 comrades were taken state hostage, during which they were beaten and electrically shocked to confess their guilt and “give up” their companions. Azat Miftahov, who is accused of building explosives and joining Narodnaya Samooborona, remained in the hands of the state in opposition to his comrades, who were eventually tortured and released.

On Oct. 31, 17-year-old anarchist Mikhail Zhlobitsky invaded the offices of the FSB (Federal Security Office and successor to the KGB) in Arkhangelsk, triggering an explosive device, causing serious damage to the building, injuring three officials and losing his own life. When the news came to our ears, there was a feeling of deep sorrow in the death of our brother who we may never have known, but we feel we've known for years because our choices are in common, against the same hateful enemies. Our feelings about Mikhail made these words, words that are not just hollow and wooden, words that are soaked and charged with rage, words that when spilled on the paper flew into sparks and triggered our desire to pull the pin from the grenade and send it to the Russian Consulate's office, giving shape to our most rabid need for revenge. The nightmare that the comrade gave to FSB federal cops, will be revived every time we or some other comrade decides to attack. Mikhail, like any comrade who gave his life for Anarchy, will again take flesh and bones through retaliatory actions and sow terror into the pathetic journalists and the worried cops and judges. As a minimum sign of respect for our deceased partner, we chose to give his name to the attack we made.

Strength and solidarity to the anarchists Yuliy Boyarshinov, Vasiliy Kuksov, Dmitriy Pchelintsev, Arman Sagynbaev, Andrey Chernov, Ilya Shakurskiy, Igor Shishkin, Viktor Filinkov, those arrested on February 1, 2019 and Azat Miftahov.

**Do you hear the noise coming from far away?
They are desperate screams from torture rooms.
The harsh blows of the bullets in bodies. The
creepy sound made by the body when the current
passes through it during the electric shock. They
are nearby, asking for their lost comrades and
wondering if they are still alive or if they are in a
secret detention center. It is mourning, angry, but
also numb for the little one who took revenge by
giving his own life. They
are our comrades and
they suffer. Listen
carefully...**

**FAI / FRI Revenge Cell
'Mikhail Zhlobitsky'**



Mural in Narrrm (aka Melbourne), so-called Australia

'LEST WE FORGET'

[ed. – Selections from 'Blessed is the Flame of Retribution', by Michel Luc Bellemare, an anarchist of Métis-Algonquin heritage. This was released following the 2021 uncovering of a mass grave at a (church-run) boarding school for indigenous youth in so-called "Canada," sparking arson of church property on 'Indian Reserve' land and a renewed exposure of the hollowness of that State's veneer of 'reconciliation' with victims of its genocidal past and present. For some background on the residential school system (also described in the companion piece to **Return Fire vol.3; Colonisation**), let's turn to 'Colonial Education is Still War' from *Indigenous Action*: "In the late 1800's, U.S. policy against Indigenous Peoples shifted from outright annihilation to forced assimilation. In 1885, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hiram Price stated "...it is cheaper to give them education than to fight them." [T]he strategy was replicated by other colonial forces, including so-called Canada. [...] In 2007, after decades of advocacy for reparations in so-called Canada, a settlement was agreed upon in the largest class action settlement ever faced by the colonial government. The settlement included a \$10,000 "common experience" payment to the approximately 90,000 people who survived residential schools with an additional \$3,000 for every year they were held at the schools. Approximately \$200 million was allocated for funding for healing and educational programs.

A group called the Truth Commission into Genocide in Canada, which has charged that the residential schools were responsible for the deaths and disappearances of thousands of Indigenous children, rejected the deal stating, **"This bribe and legal gagging is being presented as a final 'resolution' of the claims of residential school survivors, as if such unspeakable crimes as mass sterilizations, gang rape, ritualistic torture and murder are resolvable by or reducible to an issue of money..."** [...] The severe effects of boarding and residential schools on our communities continue to be felt today. With survivors from our parent's generation still facing traumas that are largely unspoken. We are still in the process of realizing the severe harm that this strategy has caused our communities, particularly the ways the sacred roles of two-spirit [ed. – see **Indigenous Anarchist Convergence – Report Back**] and matriarchs were systematically attacked. [...] Yet while facing this genocidal colonial legacy, we hear renewed calls for acknowledgments and apologies, for "honoring treaties" and "better" history lessons, or for reconciliation.

These measures do not directly challenge the underlying power relations that uphold settler colonialism. [...] Although the program of brutal forced assimilation was ended, Bureau of Indian Education still "educates" more than 40,000 students in 183 schools on 64 reservations in 23 states with the same core objectives. According to the Boarding School Healing Coalition, out of the 367 boarding schools in the so-called US, 73 remain open today with 15 of them still functioning as boarding schools.

[...] Many Indigenous children resisted and rejected settler



colonial "civilization" imposed at boarding and residential schools. They ran away and resisted the authoritarianism, economic and social stability that we so willingly participate in today. **Our communities have incredible stories of fierce children who conspired and successfully liberated themselves and others, with some traveling hundreds of miles back to their homes.** There were also those who stayed, mostly older ones, who protected and comforted those who were younger. [...] Boarding schools forced us to abandon our cultures, our language, our names, our ceremonies, our hair. The strategy of compulsory colonial education was to destroy that which makes us who we are. To break the connection we have to the land, spirit, and our ancestors. So it is our responsibility to radically reconnect. By design we cannot reconnect through the colonizer's ballot box, political offices, corporate jobs, academic degrees, or non-profit activism.

Colonization is war, this means that there is nothing to negotiate in the fight for an Indigenous future. **Anti-colonial struggle means that in our fighting back, we are also healing. This is a celebration and honoring of Indigenous knowledge and rage.** [...] We do this through ceremony, through renaming, through language immersion, through our hair, through our foods and medicines, through our songs and games, through shutting down pipelines and corporate offices, through protecting sacred places [ed. – see **'It Has Always Been the Time'**], through disrupting, intervening, and attacking that which destroys us. "]

The Church and State are amoral and have always been so. They have no backbone or genuine principles. In reality, they both will flip-flop back and forth on any and all social issues, depending on which way the wind blows. And the manner by which they accomplish all these feats of hypocrisy, back-peddling, and double-dealing is by adhering to liberal-centrism, or more specifically, the middle and the center, which enables them to pivot and twirl at a moment's notice so that they may slip-out of the tight-knots of real responsibility and/or culpability.

In fact, power and decision-making-authority in and across the Church and State are constantly being shuffled around from apparatus to apparatus, from department to department, from committee to committee, from personnel to personnel etc., wherein responsibility and/or culpability pertaining to any State-policy or Church activity is diluted in and across multiple State-sectors and/or multiple sets of Church and State-apparatuses, whereupon, in the end, no-one is truly responsible and/or culpable for any outcome the Church and State-policies may have incurred. And this lack of responsibility and/or culpability is no accident. It is designed and encoded in the functions, operations, and/or institutional mechanics of both the Church and the State, shielding their executive branches and upper-level personnel from any real accountability.

Ultimately, the end result of all these power-shifts is that no-one is specifically responsible and/or culpable for anything and/or any policies the Church and State enacts and/or exercised in its past, since no-one, except maybe the personnel at the very top of the echelons of power, truly knows what the Church and the State's real agenda is and/or was in the past. And even then, responsibility and/or culpability is limited and/or non-existence for most and/or all top personnel, in the sense that the Church and State's real agendas are constantly subjected to reformulation, reordering, and reorganization, which constantly raises the spectre of plausible deniability for any Church or State bureaucrat, as well as for any of their dysfunctional apparatuses.

Subsequently, the back channels and hidden corridors of power undergirding the Church and State

are, for the most part, shrouded in mystery. All of which is designed to conceal the real centers of power embodied in the Church and State, which, in the end, gives the Church and State *carte blanche* to perform all sorts of egregious activities, since blame or guilt is always diluted or delayed in and across many sets of Church-State institutions.¹ Case in point: the institutional-apparatuses of the Church and State are specifically designed to quash or put a lid on any disturbing activities the Church and State may have perpetrated in the past. **Facts are smothered, victims are ignored, documents are burned,**



1 ed. – The same year this scandal broke, the inquest concluded into actions of Canada's parent-State, Britain, across the Atlantic on its colonial holding to this day: so-called Northern Ireland. (The colonisation of Ireland was anything but coincidental to that of Turtle Island ('North America'); there English and (Protestant) Scottish settlers scalped their indigenous victims and tried to corral them into a 'wild Irish reserve' to free-up land for a plantation economy, before going on to do the same – tragically, with considerable later Irish participation – across the ocean.) Over two days in 1971, six hundred paratroopers had surrounded Ballymurphy estate, in conjunction with the Loyalist paramilitaries supportive of their Protestant settler predecessors ongoing dominance, attacking other nearby homes. Eleven residents were shot down. Army commanders claimed that they were under fire and that those slain were anti-colonial fighters; the inquest, fifty years later, now recognises this as a lie and cover-up, and that it was nothing more than a terroristic massacre of non-combatants (one of whom died of a heart-attack during a mock execution by the soldiers). One of the implicated officers – now a retired British Army general, Sir Mike Jackson – was second-in-command just five months later of the same Parachute Regiment as it gunned down fourteen unarmed people in Derry, the better-known 'Bloody Sunday' killings. In 2003, Jackson was British commander for the invasion of Iraq (see '**Each of Us Picks Our Own Mischief**'). Since, one of outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson's parting gifts was a send a bill to parliament for the exemption of those subjected to future inquests regarding the occupation of Northern Ireland during the height of the late 20th Century resistance, at the behest of veteran's groups incensed by even the consequence-free investigations that have passed of late.

“Criticizing reconciliation is not about shaming those elders and people who participated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it’s about attacking a government that used that moment of vulnerability to bolster its global image. I have said it before and I’ll say it again, I do not blame our older generation for being hopeful about a more peaceful future. Those who lived through the horror [of residential schools] could only have wanted a better life for the coming generations. It is the responsibility of those younger generations to stand up and say that what is being offered is not good enough. It is up to us to say that we would rather another hundred years of struggle than to accept the gentle assimilation being offered. It is up to us to give thanks to our elders for their service and then to turn to the frontlines with our feathers and drums and fists. [...] Pow_pow_pow_power recently wrote the following: “*Settler governments have been making up the rules as they go from the beginning of their invasions. While each generation of us struggles to educate ourselves to the rulebook, they disregard it and do what they want when they want. This should not be a surprise. It has always been this way because they prioritize themselves about all – above other people, above animal relatives, above the balance of Nature, and certainly above “what is right”. Laws have always been passed to legitimize their whims and interests as the intentions of seemingly rational rulers, and to keep us in compliance with their needs.*” [...] They don’t consider it violent to storm into a territory with guns drawn and remove its rightful occupants. They don’t consider it violent to level mountaintops, or clearcut forests, or to suck oil out of the ground only to burn it into the air. They don’t consider it violent to keep chickens and pigs and cows in tiny crates, never allowing them to see sunlight, using them like food machines. But smash a window of a government office... Well, that goes too far. It is time we see their laws for what they are: imaginary and hypocritical. Settler laws exist to protect settlers. We are not settlers. We are Michif. We are Anishinaabek. We are Onkwehón:we. We are Nêhiyawak. We are Omâmiwinini. We are Inuit. We are Wet’suwet’en.[...] The Delgamuukw verdict saw the courts acknowledge that the We’suwet’en territory is unceded, that they hold title and legal jurisdiction, and yet look at how Canada honours that. Legal victories are not the way we win our land and dignity. [...] Our legitimacy does not flow from the mouths of our leaders, but from our connection to the land and water and our commitment to our responsibilities to all life today and generations to come. [...] Choose your accomplices wisely. Liberals who read land acknowledgments often have too much invested in this system to actually see it change. Communists envision a system without a capitalist Canada, but they still want a communist state. One that will inevitably need to control land and exploit it. Find common heart with those who want to see the state destroyed, to have autonomous communities take its place, and to restore balance between humans and all our relations. [...] Our ancestors have been clever, sometimes biding their time quietly, sometimes striking, always secretly passing on our ceremonies and stories. I honour them as I honour you now. We are still here because of them and our children and our children’s children will still be here because of us. Never forget who we are.”

– *Reconciliation is Dead: A Strategic Proposal*

grave-markers are removed or lost, while any presiding State or Church officials are moved along to other departments or apparatuses, and/or are conveniently retired to cushy pensions, where their troubling memories slowly fade into oblivion.

In effect, bureaucracy conceals. And bureaucracy also absolves the agents of bureaucracy, Church or

State, of any wrongdoing. Thus, the reason why the State-sanctioned horrors of the Church-run residential school program have been kept bottled-up and underground for many decades, having only recently surfaced, after more than 100 years.

Lest we forget, the Church and State have always been partners in arms [*ed. – see **For the Love of God***], victimizers and abusers of indigenous populations, their abusive natures and bigoted ideologies are encoded in the bureaucratic processes and the apparatuses of the State and Church themselves, regardless of who holds power. And ironically, these are the very same apparatuses most people now look upon to mitigate and rectify the horrors of this State-approved genocide. Do not be fooled by the bleeding hearts and talking heads paraded before our eyes by the State and the mainstream media eager to regurgitate the State-approved politically sanctioned message

on cue. They are only cajoling us; i.e., we the people, to buy into the notion that the Church and State are now born again, having finally seen the light and the errors of their ways. And with flowing tears in their eyes and endless apologies on their devilish tongues, we the people, are repeatedly told to faithfully trust the bureaucratic process again, to trust the very same abusive institutions once again to right things; that is, the very same institutions who would in all

intent and purpose do it all over again given massive public approval and similar circumstances.

So let them burn, let them burn black, red, and orange into the night, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. As the Church is a rotten institution and the State as well, hence, why they have made excellent bedfellows for the last 154 years [*ed. – since the union or 'Canada'*] in all sorts of nefarious endeavors against their perceived enemies, the indigenous populations. In truth, both institutions have always promoted the most mediocre and pliable types into the upper-echelons of their apparatuses; i.e., all those degenerate moderates filled with State-approved ideologies and the spirit of Christ, whom we always find in the public square positioning themselves as champions of the greater good, but when silently behind closed doors are always willing and ready to do anything for God and country, that is, a morsel of power by any means necessary.

To quote Max Stirner, “the State... calls its violence ‘law’; that of the individual [it calls] ‘crime’”.² And the systematic cover-up of dead indigenous children and all the traumas of residential schools are just another set of examples on a long list of atrocities perpetrated by the Church and State, hand in hand.³

[...] Indeed, the Church and State will perpetrate genocide in one era, hold onto their bigoted convictions tooth and nail for over 100 years, and as soon as the winds of illumination change, just as quickly they will denounce their former genocidal activities in order to remain in step with the enlightenment of the people and retain State-power. And, we the people, bombarded daily by a litany of mainstream State-approved propagandists, are meant to swallow once again the manufactured tripe feed to us by the very State and Church who bureaucratically colluded together in covert acts of systematic extermination.

[...] In consequence, burning down churches and/or tearing down State-



Coli, Colombia: indigenous felling of genocidal slave owner Sebastian de Belalcazar's statue

approved colonialist statues is nothing but an affirmation of our innate revolutionary right to dispose of any and all senile inhuman-apparatuses, whether these are religious-apparatuses and/or degenerate liberal State-apparatuses. All told, we will tear your cherished statues down and burn your sacred Churches to the ground, with cold callous precision, joyful smiles, and dancing electric Pow-Wows!⁴

*Live, Laugh, Loot!
Blessed is The Flame of Retribution!*

'IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE TIME'

In the early hours of Oct 26th several RCMP [*Royal Canadian Mounted Police*] C-IRG vehicles were lit on fire in the Smithers Sunshine Inn parking lot.

As you read this, Coastal GasLink drills beneath the sacred headwaters of the Wedzin Kwa [*ed. – see Eric Lausen Owes Me a Lamp*]. The ground shakes in Wet'suwet'en territories. For every tremor of the earth as they drive their borehead and blast their explosives through riverbed and rock, right beneath schools of spawning salmon, tremors of pain and rage reverberate through the hearts of those who still have space to feel it.

Death surrounds us. Salmon die en masse as creeks run dry. Massive areas of once-flourishing rainforest burn. A billion snow crabs disappear and die in Alaska. Climate chaos runs rampant while mega projects churn the living world into a living nightmare. **So many people pass out of this world too soon. Maybe it gets called suicide. Or overdose. Or stroke.**

2 Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*

3 ed. – For example (preceding and concurrent to the early European colonial expansion) their collaboration in the witch hunts of the 16th-18th Centuries (see **23 Theses Concerning Revolt**), which the head of the Scottish government saw fit to apologise for... in 2022.

4 ed. – Derived from the Narragansett word powwaw, meaning "spiritual leader", now a general term for indigenous gatherings with dances, story-telling, and other ceremonies across Turtle Island ('North America').

Maybe it is a police bullet that rips through flesh and organs. All of this is the manifestation of the unbearable pain, suffering and violence brought on by colonialism and the state.

In "british columbia" it is the RCMP who defend and enforce this violence. And where extractive industries meet indigenous resistance the RCMP employ a specialized division called Community-Industry Response Group. It is C-IRG cops who volunteer to raid, surveil, harass, and brutalize land defenders on behalf of their corporate masters.

Early on October 26th four C-IRG vehicles in Smithers were set ablaze while C-IRG officers slept just meters away. The fires damaged or destroyed all four trucks and spread to several industry vehicles and an ambulance in the parking lot. The CGL and BC Hydro trucks burned are hardly regrettable. The damaged ambulance was unfortunate and unintended. No one was injured in this action because steps were taken to ensure no one would be. Vehicles were only lit where it was certain fire would not spread to structures or endanger life.

The violence enacted by industry and enforced by the police damns an entire planet to a fiery desertified future. Recognizing the fact that each of us has a

stake in this struggle means recognizing the importance of acting with our own agency, autonomy, and urgency. We must all sharpen our pain into the determination necessary to act against those responsible for our suffering.

There are no words to be shared with government or industry that can change the core of their nature. **These institutions are not people. They have no soul, no ethics, and no conscience.** Their driving force is profit at any cost, and they cannot be negotiated or reasoned with.

Liberals and centrists want politics to be neat and tidy, within the bounds of respectability. The labeling of actions outside of these bounds as a 'false flag' operation [*ed. – see Eric Laursen Owes Me a Lamp*] severely limits our ability to broaden the scope of struggle and directly challenge the state's violence. Successful movements utilize a broad set of tactics to achieve their goals [*ed. – see the supplement to Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics*]. False flag accusations only serve to isolate those who choose to engage in more confrontational actions from broader support, which is dangerous and limiting. If there is a conspiracy here, it is the overt collusion between corporations and state forces to continue the legacy of genocidal violence on indigenous peoples and land.

Burning cop cars is easy. Taking the steps to prevent arrests is less so. Research methods that work;

warriorup.noblogs.org is a good place to start. Use security oriented and open source tech tools on public WiFi for this, or better yet, go old-school and get books. Test your methods. Think carefully about how fire can spread to make sure you will not unintentionally burn down a building or cause injury. Know how to avoid leaving evidence. **Think critically about the consequences of action as well as inaction.** Trust your rebellious instincts and move with courage.

It has always been the time to fight. It still is.

RECONCILIATION IS DEAD. REVOLUTION IS ALIVE.

Canada invades. Invades on behalf of industry. Invades during ceremony. **Canada tears us from our land. Tears us from our families, from our homes.** Takes our drums away. Takes our women away. Jails us for protecting the land, for being in ceremony, for honouring our ancestors.

On February 10 [2020], RCMP invaded unceded Unist'ot'en territory, arresting and forcibly removing Freda Huson (Chief Howilhkak), Brenda Michell (Chief Geltiy), Dr. Karla Tait, and four Indigenous land defenders from our *yintah* [*ed. – traditional territory*]. They were arrested in the middle of a ceremony to honour the ancestors. Police tore down the red dresses that were hung to hold the spirits of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two spirit people. They extinguished our sacred fire.

We have had enough. Enough dialogue, discussion, negotiation at the barrel of a gun. Canada comes to colonize. Reconciliation is dead.

*It is time to fight for our land, our lives, our children, our future.
Revolution lives.*

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD

[ed. – This reflection on 2012's film adaptation of Victor Hugo's classic novel *Les Misérables* (1862) was first published as a continuation of the author's previous essay, 'Golem in the Catacombs', concerned – among other things – with philosopher Giorgio Agamben's category of the apparatus: "When living beings are separated from their own expressions, gestures, tools, and traditions, they are reduced to golem, mere bodies, and every influence that these things, once a part of their being and now expropriated by the category of "apparatus", exercise over them is now read as a form of corruption or control. This postmodern trope of the fragility of liberty – all influence is coercion; therefore liberty is a utopian concept – derives from the unconscious assumption that every factor external to a golem has in fact been designed to mold it and guide it through the apparatuses where its miserable life plays out."]

The defeated communards of 1871¹ who had taken refuge in the Paris catacombs suffered a particularly gruesome fate. The victorious Versailles troops, who had received tacit support – in a stirring example of elite internationalism – from Bismarck's Prussians [ed. – with whom they had been at war before the Commune was declared], dynamited the catacomb tunnels where the refugees huddled, killing thousands. We can only wonder how many survived the initial blast, the earth itself falling in on their heads (the World Turned Upside Down [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg40*] falling back into place?), and wandered the catacombs, emptied of their utopia, in search of some subsistence.

Later, the Sacré Cœur was built on the butte of Montmartre, the proletarian neighborhood where the insurrection began and where one of the key battles took place in the suppression of the Commune. The extravagant penance, now a major tourist attraction, prevents us from returning to the site of our loss. **Long before the science of urban architecture as social control, the Church knew construction as an act of war designed to finish off a defeated enemy**, for le Sacre Couer was one of the last of a long lineage. The famous monastery at Mont-Saint-Michel was built atop the most important gathering place of the Gallic druids; unwitting lines of tourists pay it homage today with cameras in hand. Throughout South America, the oldest churches are

1 ed. – "The Paris Commune of 1871 looms large in the imaginations of anarchists, communists, and leftists. In actuality, it was brief and ill-fated. It lasted for just seven weeks, from March 18 to May 28, and ended with the slaughter of thirty-thousand working-class Parisians at the hands of the French government. Still, it offered a bold – if imperfect – vision of what a collective society could be" (Baba Yaga Burns Paris to the Ground).



18.03.14: On the anniversary of the Paris Commune's formation, Sacré Cœur Basilica and its church-yard is heavily tagged, 'Down With All Authorities', 'Fire to the Churches', 'Fuck Tourism' & 'Solidarity with Monica & Francisco' (see *Return Fire vol.2 pg80*) then awaiting trial for heavily damaging the interior of Zaragoza's Basilica with an explosive attack

to be found atop the *waka* of the Aymara [ed. – see *Yawar's Story*] or the sacred sites of other colonized peoples.

In literature, another kind of Church was built atop an earlier revolutionary defeat. Victor Hugo's monumental *Les Misérables* is set against the June Rebellion of 1832 (though it must also be read as a fruit of Hugo's troubled relationship with the revolution of 1848)². And although Hugo, a leftist, is sympathetic

2 ed. – The June Rebellion of republican revolt against the French monarchy was the last gasp of the 1830 uprising. "In 1830, the working people of Paris erected barricades and overthrew the king, only to see the aristocrats hijack the revolution by substituting another royal line. [...] February 1848. Three days of barricading in Paris toppled the king; the common people stood down the army, rampaged through the palace, and burned the royal throne on the site of the Bastille. A chain reaction of revolt radiated across Europe, spreading faster than any wave of unrest in the digital age.

Yet the first elections brought conservative politicians back to power under the sign of democracy, and in June 1848, the provisional government of the brand new Republic rescinded the few steps it had taken to address the plight of the poor. In response, the workers once again barricaded the streets and called for revolution. This time, they were on their own, practically without any allies among the bourgeoisie and Left politicians. Good liberals like the author Victor Hugo considered it their duty to accompany the army as it systematically slaughtered the rebels; even the self-professed anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon identified with the government. Only the decadent poet Charles Baudelaire rejected the interests of his class to fight again on the barricades alongside the likes of Emmanuel Barthélemy.

[...] Three years after the events of 1848, Napoleon's nephew organized a coup d'état and established himself as Emperor, bringing the brief reign of democracy to an end. This time, Victor Hugo implored Paris to build barricades and rise against the usurper, but the workers turned him a deaf ear. Why should they risk their lives to preserve the authority of the democrats who had cut down the last uprising? Now that the Reaction had

with the revolutionaries, his is above all a tale of redemption. Marius and Cosette may marry and find happiness and security (in the tale's ethical grammar the latter is implicitly proffered as a precondition for the former) with Marius's upper-class family (and, in the original novel, Jean Valjean's factory money), their youthful flirtation with insurrection overlooked. A questioned God smiles on them, revealing in the end His undoubtable munificence, with the Happy Ending serving as proof of transformative forgiveness. In an earlier age, kings and tsars had to exercise general pardons – the Jubilee – to appear godlike. This new God need only save one soul – like the lottery winner or the pop star that rises alone out of crowds of miserable millions – to redeem Himself for the spectating masses.

Les Misérables' long run tells a sort of story about the rise and fall of modernity. The original novel sets the archetypes into play. Love conquers all and heroes find happy endings. Hugo, after all, needed to tack into a new wind after the massacres of '48. He was part of a generation of writers who flirted with revolutionary ideas, only to abandon them when they were put into practice and used as weapons against the old order by "the wretched of the earth". A republican who tended towards pacifism, Hugo spoke out vehemently for the cause of equality and fraternity and even consorted with anarchists, yet he also helped to suppress the 1848 insurrection in Paris. Later, old Victor was not as active as many of his colleagues who would lend their pens to justify the repression of proles and pétroleuses after the Paris Commune.³ He nonetheless found the utility in

no more use for the politicians who had paved the way for it, they too were forced into prison and exile. In repressing the workers' revolt, they had dug their own graves" (Emmanuel Barthélemy: Proletarian Fighter, Blanquist Conspirator, Survivor of the Galleys, Veteran of the Uprisings of 1848, Fugitive, Duelist, Ruffian & – Very Nearly – Assassin of Karl Marx).

- 3 ed. – "On May 21, the Versailles army slipped through the gates of Paris. As the army fought its way through the barricades, their shells started to ignite buildings – the first to go up in flames was the Ministry of Finance. The Communards started setting their own fires to prevent the army's advance and to be able to escape under clouds of smoke. [...] The Versailles army re-conquered the city, the smoke cleared, and the fire damage proved less extensive than originally thought. The greatest loss was the tens of thousands of Communards who were slaughtered, and the thousands more who were subsequently imprisoned or exiled to New Caledonia. But the scale of the flames didn't really matter, because the fires were the perfect propaganda device. Conservatives politicians and newspapers seized on the fires as a chance to sway public opinion, and it worked. This was their primary tactic: blame all [of the fires set] on working-class women, and then make those women monsters. Call them *pétroleuses* – essentially, petroleum-wielding lady incendiaries" (Baba

a tactful separation between art and life, and class-climbing lovers would provide the perfect protagonists for the modern storyline.

Les Misérables the musical struck the perfect note for a new generation of sell-out artists and failed revolutionaries, remassified and forced to consume their own defeat. The most poignant song in Schönberg and Boublil's musical, opening in Paris and London before becoming a Broadway hit, is "Empty Chairs at Empty Tables." In the lines,

*Here they talked of revolution.
Here it was they lit the flame.
Here they sang about tomorrow
And tomorrow never came.
[...] Oh my friends, my friends, don't ask me
What your sacrifice was for
Empty chairs at empty tables
Where my friends will sing no more*

One can almost imagine a recent university graduate, newly thrust into the real world, surveying in his mind the halls in the Sorbonne where the students debated [ed. – before or during the 'French May' of 1968; see *Return Fire vol.2 pg96*], or the meeting room in Chicago where SDS [*Students for a Democratic Society*] had their 1969 congress that would launch the Maoist faction [ed. – 'The Weathermen'] as an armed vanguard, back before the hammer fell.

It is the song of one who has participated in something transcendental, something real for the first time in his life, only to lose it because the community it was born in has been swept away, the other communards either shot down (as in 1832) or robbed by the Spectacle and the prisons (as were the Weathermen and their less mediatic contemporaries). The singer knows not how to find his way back and, enslaved again by a cruel purgatory, can only blame the foolishness of his braver comrades for having tried to storm heaven.

Finally, the Hollywood remake with Russell Crowe and Hugh Jackman proving – at times painfully – that today's actors can still sing and dance, closes the cycle. Passing through the crass cultural cannibalism of the last years, with which every narrative that ever enjoyed an ounce of success is retailed for the silver screen in a desperate bid to continue producing without creating anything original, *Les Misérables'* love story – at a time when the romantic narrative must arm itself with witty cynicism or worldly nuance

Yaga Burns Paris to the Ground).

to rise above its festering limitations – comes off as antiquatedly trite. It must hide behind a grandiose production and the outsider antics of Sascha Baron Cohen and Helena Bonham Carter because it is simply too weak to carry the plot, though in the original musical it is clearly identified as the principal narrative thread, all of Hugo's other subplots and digressions abandoned without hesitation.

The excitement of the insurrection is far more moving than the romance, and here we find another important theme. Of necessity the Spectacle presents us with increasingly numerous renditions of revolution, from *Fight Club* to *Robin Hood*. **To serve as operations of recuperation, some of these revolutions defeat themselves through extremism, providing a cautionary moral tale against putting ideals into practice. Others attack one aspect of power, say the banks, while reinforcing another, like patriarchy, and others still succeed by piercing the conspiracy, revealing the truth, and allowing the peaceful masses or the good institutions to make everything right, leaving the actual transformation to play out off camera.** How is the rebellion of 1832 recuperated?

This question is difficult to answer, just as today's spectators might have a hard time placing the story's defeated revolution in the genealogy of their current liberty. William Wallace fights against an evil king – the bad kind of authority – and the voiceover in the final scenes assures us that the Scots eventually won their freedom, a fact that their recent [*ed. – written in 2014*] opportunity to vote on independence can only confirm. In one of Mel Gibson's many remakes of *Braveheart*, *Patriot* – the one set during the American Revolution – the relation between the heroic struggle portrayed and the audience's consequent lack of need to struggle is even more obvious. But what about an attempted political revolution in 19th century constitutional France? On the one hand, the dissidents' decision to take up arms is an admirable flaw, when they really all should have just married well and joined high society. On the other hand, their rebellion is presented as an idealistic spirit – most purely embodied by Gavroche, the fearless child – that we are meant to believe eventually triumphed, though it can be carried on just as easily by the final scene's marching masses as by armed insurgents.

What makes up for the story's ambiguity with regards to revolution is the parallel plot of redemption. The State is redeemed in Javert's mercy, the Church is redeemed in Bishop Myriel, and the bourgeoisie are redeemed as the guarantors of Marius and Cosette's eventual happiness (suggesting a curious window on

the American Founding Fathers' replacement of [*ed. – intellectual father of liberal capitalism John*] Locke's "property" with "the pursuit of happiness").

*Do you hear the people sing
Lost in the valley of the night?
It is the music of a people
Who are climbing to the light.*

*For the wretched of the earth
There is a flame that never dies.
Even the darkest night will end
And the sun will rise.*

*They will live again in freedom
In the garden of the Lord.
They will walk behind the plough-share,
They will put away the sword.
The chain will be broken
And all men will have their reward.*

*Will you join in our crusade?
Who will be strong and stand with me?
Somewhere beyond the barricade
Is there a world you long to see?
Do you hear the people sing?
Say, do you hear the distant drums?
It is the future that they bring
When tomorrow comes!*

The Christian moral – wait, pray, and all will be well – comes through in the final song. And the presence of that moral in the three generations of the telling, at the adolescence, decadence, and twilight of modernity, suggests a continuity that is both obvious and inadmissible.

I don't know how the tale was received by its original audience, but by the third telling, the love that holds up the contradictions in the narrative structure of *Les Misérables* is not the cupidic escapism of its young paramours, but the love of God that provides transcendental weight to the promise of redemption, overwhelming the failed, forgotten revolution's promises of transcendence.

We can argue, and with good reason, that during the Enlightenment [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg48*] science replaced Christianity as the religion of the State. We should not, however, forget Christianity's paradoxical persistence. It is a key force in nationalist movements from Ukraine to Venezuela, and an important tool for turning exploited populations against revolution, winning obedience to state authorities, extending capitalist property relations around the world. In South America and Africa in particular, Christian missionaries serve in many ways as advance scouts for logging and mining

“It’s easy for those of us from societies with high percentages of atheism to underestimate the level of religiosity that is mixed in with industrialism in the global south, where, amongst the poor at least, they are often jointly re-enforcing. Much of radical politics is religion by other means, but in the slums, and amongst the dispossessed generally, the old gods are growing in stature. While sects may differ in their degree of quietism or militancy, they share an unreality that is unlikely to aid the map-reading ability of the downtrodden in truly confusing times. The wider case against religion has been argued well elsewhere so I won’t bother, but it is worth noting that while western anarchists’ most organised intra-class ‘competitors’ are political groupings, in many third worlds, anarchists are faced by the strengthening ranks of theocracy. That’s of course in those places where anarchists do exist, which – though growing [ed. – see *‘Our Anarchy Lives’*] – are still not many. In contrast, religious authoritarians seem to be gaining converts everywhere, and, generally, the more social dislocation, the better the recruitment. It would be too simplistic to blame this all on industrialism but clear relationships can be seen — for example, that demonstrated by Vandana Shiva between the spread of the green revolution and the growth of fundamentalist communalist movements in India. If anything, the coltan fuelled war in Congo [ed. – see *Capitalism & Electrification*] and the subsequent spread of charismatic native/Pentecostal cults bent on solving their problems through expelling tens of thousands of ‘child witches’ is an even more spooky sign of the marriage of the modern and the magical.”

– Desert



companies. And Christianity’s close cousin, Islam, is effectively building states throughout Africa and Asia in places where European colonialism failed to do so.

Anarchists in this century do not talk as much about religion as an animating force for the apparatuses of control, and if we do, we tend to understand it as a force in the lives of people who have not progressed as far in their civilizational development, whether the backwater under the microscope is South Carolina or Kenya.

We might speak of two distinct figures that represent the exploited during the Christian and then the scientific phases of capitalist accumulation; the zombie who is enchanted and set to work and the golem who is constructed by its master, made of broken material, simple dust. Christianity simply robs the soul to create workers, confounding its slaves or holding them captive to metaphysical blackmail, while scientific power gives the masters an architectural control over the environment and reproduction of their

subjects, not merely enslaving them but creating them out of whole cloth.

But this progression of distinct phases owes too much to the fundamental eschatology that Christianity and Western science share. **In practice, the two modalities of power operate simultaneously.** In a platonic world where body and spirit have been alienated [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg18*], in a Christian world where the body has been shamed and the spirit captivated, in a capitalist world where the body has been enslaved and the spirit banished, and in a scientific world where the body has been mechanized and the spirit disproven, the apparatuses of control lack an *animus*.

They (by which I suppose I mean the conduits of apparatuses that exist to evaluate other apparatuses) can measure the power that flows between the conduits and captives of a given apparatus, binding and differentiating them. But they are also aware of the limits of a captive’s identification with their apparatus, a certain melancholy among conduits that acts like friction, decreasing their conductivity and even halting production.

And they have seen cases of a grim nihilism that arises from time to time, causing captives to act like barbarians and handle their apparatus with brute violence and against its design, or one that spreads more invisibly to conduit and captive alike, causing them to blur and desert their roles [ed. – see *Plenty to Do and Little to Prove*].

Even in a well designed apparatus, the flow of power is not enough to motivate the conduits or bind the captives to their role. The threat of punishment is also a necessary element, but too honest to be left in the open for long without delivering diminishing returns and augmenting risks. The people need to be animated through an affective allegiance with an entity that cannot disappoint them by changing the terms of the contract, as any institution of power will eventually do when it capitalizes on whatever trust has been deposited in it. **That entity is their own longing, the first glimpse of transcendence, the very substance the State has always worked to control or destroy.**

If in its first millennium the Church aimed to keep the spirit out of the commoners’ grasp, effectively creating a less spiritual world by enclosing it in Latin

scripture and in the Holy See [*ed. – governing body of the Catholic Church*] and stamping out one of the most frequent heresies – that the Holy Ghost spoke to everyone who listened – now it is one of several institutions whose purpose is to divert the miserable and the wretched from a nihilistic confrontation with a dead, scientific society by dangling in front of them a new spirituality, controlled as the old one was but not so tightly, for the new permissible spirit is accessible, on sale, and adaptable to consumer demand.

While traveling recently in South America, I got to see this aggressive marketing firsthand. The evangelists are at the forefront, but is it overly paranoid to assume that one pope was recalled and another was elected to jumpstart a new Catholic evangelism in South America? From one country to the next, billboards announced mega-revivals by visiting evangelists from the US, each eager to expand their fief. **And the growth of evangelism goes hand in hand with popular support for snitching, mining, policing, the eradication of indigenous cultures, and development in general.**⁴ I also came face to face with a revived Christianity's effectiveness at dealing with potentially destabilizing mental illness and subversive cynicism, when I got to know two truck drivers. The first was batshit crazy, and the second was a jaded ex-revolutionary who had been imprisoned during the dictatorship and evidently was not impressed by what the socialists had accomplished in power (a disenchantment that for some people leads to radicalization, but that has driven entire, forgotten generations into the arms of God).

The first driver told about a girl in Brazil who was dead for a week and then got resuscitated. While dead, St. Peter took her to visit heaven and hell so she could tell everyone about it. In hell she came across the Pope, hung upside down for being a Catholic, and Celia Cruz [*ed. – Cuban-American singer*] for her lascivious lyrics. She also spied Michael Jackson.

"For molesting children?" I asked.

"For dancing backwards, contrary to the spirit of God," the driver told me with a straight face. He went on to explain that the King of Pop was surrounded by moonwalking demons, tormenting him to eternity for his linear perverseness.

Like I said, batshit crazy, the kind of person who would undermine any rational discourse of social control, if the Church hadn't given them a ready made

4 ed. – This was written before the 2019 coup in Bolivia by a brief fundamentalist-aligned government wanting to open up the lithium reserves of the country to Elon Musk (see 'Let's Destroy Everything That is Called Tesla!').

set of fantasies and bugaboos to fixate on.

I thought I would like the second truck driver more, because I learned off the bat that he had been a political prisoner. During the first hours of our shared drive, we spoke about the dictatorship, the current government, and the struggle by indigenous people in the region. Then the sun set, he turned off the radio, looked over at me, and asked if I believed in God. The following hours were Hell, as he aggressively tried to convince me that people were evil, and that quinoa was God's way of letting the natives know about Jesus, since the Bible didn't arrive until much later.

When he stopped to help a stranded driver replace a spare tire, I told him, *"See, you're a good person!"*

"I am not good!" he shrieked, tears forming in his eyes.

A slow learner, I finally decided it was a mistake to try to have a reasonable conversation with him. **I will never know what happened to that truck driver in prison, why he hated himself, and to what extent the corruption of his socialist former comrades affected him, but it seemed clear that Christianity mediated it for him. Love of God as hatred of self and hatred of society, but also an opportunity to do good in a safe, non-projectual⁵ way that requires no emotional risk, since the end is already written.** Without that, I doubt he would have been able to function as a productive member of society.

Who can doubt that Christianity today is both innovative and on the cutting edge of social control, when they consider the great currency that Christianity has among the mad and insane? While the pills that are meant to regulate the emotional unreliability of the golem remain imperfect, the opiate of religion succeeds in redeeming millions of depressives and psychotics, casualties of capitalism who would otherwise turn to a destabilizing lunacy, as socially useful subjects. After all, good Christians may play out their paranoid persecution fantasies while faithfully serving as snitches, taxpayers, workers, and soldiers. Faith can be the release for their madness, a belief in human evil as the non-

5 ed. – "Projectuality is a word we use to describe our projects – our intentional activities – in their long-term and contextual dimensions. Projectuality is a consciousness and intentionality in how we project our desires and our force towards the world around us and towards the future, and in this way, how we make sure our projects take us to, and help us create, the places we want to go" (Putting into Practice: Adding to the Conversation on Anarchist Activity in Montreal).

heretical expression of a manichean [ed. – i.e. dualistic] nihilism, and they never need to see the inside of an asylum.

The simultaneity of a Christian modality of power with the modality of scientific social control is also evident in the affective allegiance that can only exist for the subjects of a totalitarian state. Even in this age of scientific rationalism, people can experience a transformative rapture when they surrender themselves to the absolute power of a bureaucratic institution.

In the abstract this hypothesis, or any other that could ascribe such passion to a bureaucracy, seems doubtful. But imagine what it was like for the arrestees of the Greenscare [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg83*], locked up in the dungeons of the State, their entire future in the hands of the FBI. When they broke and agreed to become snitches, did they feel the warm rush of clemency, like the kiss of the papal ring? Giving themselves over to the advances of the long-shunned State, did they suddenly find themselves in the presence of God, as Winston Smith finally found Big Brother [ed. – in *George Orwell's novel '1984'*]?

With the invention of the golem, spiritual matters should have been put to rest. The living world has been utterly destroyed, ground to dust, and our new bodies – our new selves – are made from that dust, constructed in arrangements that suit the needs of power and set to play in a Garden of Eden that is really just one big factory. How could cyborgs dream?

6 ed. – “Since Mesopotamian times, religion has always been an attempt to escape the body: it becomes more and more gnostic, in the sense of hatred of the body. If you want to hear some marvelous gnostic, all you have to do is to listen to some of the enthusiastic advocates of the Internet. The people who really believe that you are going to transcend the body, download consciousness, escape from the corpse. It is immortality through technology, transcendence through machinic consciousness. It is the same of pie in the sky when you die that the old anarchists used to criticize about religion. The Internet, in this aspect, is simply the modern version of religion. Cyberspace is our version of heaven.

These myths do not go away. This rationalism turns out to be another irrational cult, just another ideology, another form for class consciousness. The problem of reembodiment, therefore, is the only religious, intellectual, and technical question we need to ask ourselves. The body is both the mystery and the key to the mystery at the same time. Cyberspace doesn't happen in the body. The “Body without Organs” is a phrase from Deleuze and Guattari – and they are strangely ambivalent about the moral aspect of this body. I understand their “machinic consciousness,” that it is not necessarily evil. I could talk about the

Yet dream we do, and become depressed, and sometimes go off the deep end and paint the canvass of our misery with a red more real than acrylic tones can simulate (guns will be blamed, though fortunately in the last few years the disarmed nations have increasingly belied this allegation with enthusiastic uses of knives and automobiles [ed. – see *Calling It Terror*]).

I know very little about the old Buddhist states, but I can imagine that if they had grown to install a world system metaphysically organized atop the opposite pole in a similar mind/matter dichotomy, with a capitalism that measured accumulations of peace and duty rather than trade and production, eventually the body – that misleading shadow of the false physical world – would reassert itself and require more archaic institutions of state authority to coddle and distract its longings, always in a sphere that did not intersect with matters of the spirit.

So it is today. The golem still dream and cry – but if they are fabricated beings made of the dust of the old world, perhaps Democritus [ed. – *pre-Socratic Greek philosopher*] went awry in looking for the atom in the too-small-to-see, for if even dust contains dreamings the atom must be the universe itself – and they must be given something great and out of reach to love and to fear. The subjects of state power are no longer living beings, and there is a cathedral built atop each of our past defeats. To pay homage we are told we must walk in through the doors. On arrival we're not sure it's what we were looking for but we mouth along with the rite to assuage our doubts, just as the last grandiose song in a bad musical tries to divert our dissatisfaction.

But the body cannot walk to the spirit any more than the spirit can wish itself a body.

Work continues, disappointments stack up, hairs go grey and bellies flab, the tables and chairs where we sat in our passionate debates empty out, the street that was a bonfire is an apparatus again and the memory no longer seems worthy of passing on because of the inarticulate confusion it provokes in us. Yet the sense of something greater, immediate and unreachable, something that gives us courage, that could wrap us in the strongest of embraces and protect us through death or defeat, mocks us from all directions.

psychedelic experience as an imaginal machine. My quarrel with machinic consciousness comes when it posits that the body is evil and that the mind is good. And do not forget that the Catholic Church loved Descartes [ed – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg54*]. This Cartesian consciousness we now think of as machinic, modern, and scientific, was at one time hailed by the Catholic Church as a true religious philosophy.” (Cybernetics & Entheogenics).

REBELS BEHIND BARS

– text by prisoners & repression news

The Medical & Judicial Powers are Relentless Against Anarchist Comrade Boris (France)

[continued from *Return Fire vol.6 chap.3*]

In April 2020, our comrade and friend Boris set fire to the antennas of four cell phone operators, as well as those of the cops and the gendarmes on the Mont Poupet (Jura). Identified by DNA present on a bottle cap, he was incarcerated in September 2020 in the prison of Nancy, then sentenced in April 2021 to four years in prison, two of which are unsuspended. In a public letter written from prison,¹ he defended his act by his desire to oppose the increasing digitalization of our lives – with all the control, environmental and social ravages it implies [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net*] – through direct action. In August 2021, he was seriously injured in a cell fire, and has since been in the hands of the medical authorities. On the judicial side, his imprisonment was lifted at the time of the appeal trial of the following September (postponed *sine die*), while an enquiry, still in progress, was entrusted to a judge in Nancy in order to determine the causes of the fire and to investigate the eagerness of the screws to let our companion suffocate in his cell.

Alternating between artificial coma and semi-consciousness for a few months, Boris could not make his own decisions. The doctors were not without mistakes in their diagnoses, but always with unwavering confidence. At the beginning of March 2022, Boris was transferred from the severe burns wing of the Metz hospital to the intensive care unit of the Besançon CHRU, which in April decided to get rid of him by sending him to another unit that was not well suited to his situation, without his opinion having any importance. **This decision, which had serious consequences and meant the abandonment of active care, was essentially motivated by the fact that no favourable evolution of his state of health was observed, following miserable statistical criteria.** Clearly, these criteria take absolutely no account of the particular individual to whom they are applied in an absolute and chilling manner, even if he expresses his fierce will to continue to live and fight to

get better. Taking advantage of his current quadriplegia, and despite the fact that he is able to speak, lucid and combative, the doctors decided not to resuscitate him if a new serious infection occurred. It was only by protesting and writing letters that they had to take into account his will to survive and resume a minimum of active care.

But of course this gradually became unacceptable to the hospital authorities. **An anarchist ex-convict who dares to question the medical dogma, who refuses to resign himself without flinching to their deadly diagnoses, cannot be lucid! He is obviously too “influenceable”, according to the pundits in white coats (by his anti-authoritarian ideas?).** So, when Boris stubbornly tries to have access to his medical file in spite of the obstacles of the hospital which refused it to him until now, and that he also expects that close relations apart from the family can discuss his situation with the doctor, the vase of the authorities overflows.

And so, on June 8, 2022, Mrs. Elisabeth Batit, doctor of the CHRU of Besançon in charge of Boris' situation, armed with the power that her function confers to her, which she intends to impose at any cost, decided to make a step further in her undertaking of demolishing the companion as an individual. **Without his knowledge, and in a letter signed jointly with the social worker of the hospital, she proceeded to a report to the Public Prosecutor's Office of Besançon (the same one who had been in charge of the preliminary investigation on the antennas...) to launch a procedure of “putting under legal protection”, supposedly to “protect” him against her own decisions.** What better then for the zealous prosecutor than to order, the same day, the dispatch of an expert-psychiatrist to decree that in addition to his paralysis, our companion would be henceforth “unable to provide alone for his interests”. On June 14, the mind executioner who answers to the name of Thomas Carbonnel, and is none other than the vice-director of the local psychiatric hospital, duly chosen by the prosecutor on his small official list, thus passed unexpectedly in Boris's hospital room to recommend his placement “under reinforced curatorship”.

It is a judge of the children of Vesoul, delegated since a few weeks “as judge of the guardianship” at the court of Besançon, which emitted in haste a provisional emergency order against our companion, entitled “safeguard of justice”. A measure that she will be able to aggravate by putting him under curatorship or guardianship for several years, at the time of the contradictory hearing which should take place within

1 actforfree.noblogs.org/post/2021/06/25/prison-of-nancy-maxeville-france-why-i-burned-the-two-antennas-of-mont-poupet

one year. From the musty darkness of her office, without warning anyone, not even the person concerned, the judge Marie-Lee Avena therefore decreed on July 8 that Boris could “engage in excessive acts” and appointed a Judicial Representative for the Protection of Adults (MJPM) who takes control of all of his mail, his accounts and future resources (such as the adult disability benefit): UDAF 25, the Departmental Union of Family Associations of Doubs.

Created by a Vichy [ed. – i.e., Nazi collaborator] law on families reformed in 1945, the UDAF gathers dozens of religious or secular associations which proudly defend one of the pillars of patriarchy with the public authorities: the family [ed. – see *Comments on 'Polyamory?'*]. It is a major organization on which the State relies to crush the autonomy of the one million people placed under guardianship or curatorship, including from 1968 to 2007 because of... “wastefulness, transgression or idleness”.

At UDAF 25, in addition to its hundred or so employees, one can naturally find people who are increasingly eager for power, such as its new President Karima Rochdi, former deputy mayor of Besançon who has become the leader of the Macronist opposition in the current city council. The one who now intends to rule with an iron fist the administrative steps of the companion to get out of the hospital, is the same one who had for example not ceased to rant against the ZAD des Vaîtes in Besançon, relentlessly denouncing the opponents to these old working gardens being turned into concrete as a bunch of “extremist ecologists”. As for the new general manager of the UDAF 25, Thierry Pillot, more particularly in charge of the service “of judicial protection measures for adults” which concerns our companion, he has made a good part of his career as a manager within the biggest exploiter of disabled people in the Doubs (the ADAPEI, which has become the Pluriel Foundation), whose board of directors includes for example... the head doctor of the service where Boris is still, a representative of the Ministry of the Interior, but also the former director of the penitentiary services (SPIP) of Doubs and Jura.

The exploitation and subjugation of people considered “fragile” or “abnormal” is a subsidized business and a well-established mechanism, which is run by a whole clique of authority figures and paternalist good intentions.

Boris has been carrying anarchist ideas against all

forms of power for years, and he is once again paying a high price. For democracy, increasingly sold as the only possible horizon under the paradigm of technological freedom, pathologizing so-called “non-standard” or overly challenging behaviors is a way of trying to neutralize them in order to impose its hegemony. Whether it is by the most brutal repression, or by the attempt to put under forced guardianship those who do not resign themselves to their fate. And why should it deprive itself of this, against an anarchist or anyone who steps out of line, as long as its lackeys don't have scores settled for all the misery they sow on a daily basis?

*It is also against the dispossession of all that it is a question of fighting,
Active solidarity with Boris, in the way that each individual will find the most adequate...*

**Anarchists in solidarity and complicity with Boris
July 28, 2022**



The Persecution of Anarchists and Cigarette Butts in the Bavarian-Christian Kingdom 2022 (Germany)

*[continued from **Return Fire vol.6 chap.4**]*

The following text is intended to give some background to the ongoing 129 trial [for criminal association] in Munich and to provide information about recent developments as well as to provide a general assessment of the whole situation. The proceedings became known on 26.04.22, when coordinated house searches took place in four apartments, the anarchist library Frevel and a print shop.¹

Before we explain what we know about the chronological course that the investigations took, we'll

¹ web.archive.org/web/https://de.indymedia.org/node/188585

repeat the charges: the 129 criminal association case, including the 15 criminal offenses we are charged with (either calling for criminal acts, approving criminal acts, threatening, or both), relates to the accusation of having edited, written, printed, and distributed the anarchist newspaper Zündlumpen, published from May 2019 to September 2021. In short, the accused are alleged to be the Zündlumpen editorial staff, which in turn is alleged to be a criminal organization.

How Did It All Begin?

Zündlumpen was given the immeasurable honor of having its first accusation assigned to it by the Bavarian-Christian viceroy, Dr. Joachim Hermann himself. To explain: since the beginning of time, the disciplined CSU [governing conservative Bavarian party] man Joachim has been commander-in-chief of his equally disciplined executive authorities, for Joachim is Bavarian Minister of the Interior. Joachim watches over the Bavarian police, not known for their leniency, as well as the Bavarian borders and the Bavarian constitutional protection. With Joachim it is clear that when it comes to borders, he wants them closed, when it comes to refugees, he doesn't want them, when it comes to police officers, he wants tens of thousands of new ones, when it comes to "security", Joachim wants to invest billions of euros, when Joachim talks about a black person, he calls him "a wonderful negro" and when it comes to left-wing extremism, Joachim sees a "growing danger" year after year when he presents the secret service report. So it was Joachim himself, the majestic highness of the green armada, who suddenly felt threatened by Zündlumpen. When Zündlumpen, making reference to some statements made by Joachim about dangerous Zündlumpen, basically wrote that one would indeed stand historically and purely theoretically on the side of the murderers of kings etc. [ed. – see '*Our Anarchy Lives*'], Joachim Hermann personally made an accusation for "threat".

Everyone knows that the repressive authorities in Bavaria are annoying and old-school, even Dr. Joachim's rapping son Jakob aka Jaggy Jackpot: "Lots of jobs, lots of cops, that's Bavaria, bro. / That means I hold the weed by my balls, bro." So Zündlumpen is guilty of lese-majesty, this time in the form of threat – the start of a large-scale investigation whose political motivation could not be clearer or more symbolic given this prelude.

First Investigations

After this first report, however, Zündlumpen continued to diligently collect accusations. The most recent was after March 2020, when everything was revolving around Covid, when Zündlumpen recommended that it would be best to spit on police officers in the event of a Covid infection. A tremor went through the social media networks of the cops. In Erfurt, Lüneburg and Cologne, accusations of incitement to commit a crime were filed, and the respective public prosecutors' offices forwarded them to Munich. At about the same time, posters appeared in Munich whose originals had appeared in Zündlumpen, and the fact that these were put up did not escape the attention of the police either. **Some obedient citizens also occasionally got hold of Zündlumpen in their hands or mailboxes, which provoked them to such an extent that they immediately called the cops.** As time went by, the reports concerning Zündlumpen piled up on the desk of the criminal police officers for left-wing extremism (State Protection).

The first steps of the investigation were as follows: trying to identify the IP address of author of the Zündlumpen blog on NoBlogs. No results. Then the LKA tried to analyze the printed image of the captured Zündlumpen issues: these were apparently printed with an inkjet printer. Then the recovered Zündlumpen issues were analyzed for DNA, which again yielded no results.

A further step was then to file a complaint against Zündlumpen for instructing people to commit crimes, since in a subsequent issue (during the curfew at the time) it explained how to switch off street lamps. This explanation was then linked by the Munich State Security to a number of cables that were cut in Internet and telephone boxes in Munich. Since power cables were cut, which lay open afterwards, an investigation was opened for "sabotage endangering the state". For these boxes sabotaged on 31.12.2021 which interrupted Internet and telephone lines, the police investigated a little bit and came up empty handed. **Apparently, the cops could not take any traces from the boxes, because in view of the open lines, a Telecom employee always had to come first to repair the box.** The investigative strategies used by the cops did not provide any evidence, such as inquiries at supra-regional police stations as to whether something similar had happened before, as well as the posting of calls for witnesses or the analysis of possible routes of the perpetrators. The State Security was in active contact with Telecom Security regarding this matter and wanted to suggest whether it would be possible to introduce an alarm system in the event of disturbances, which would immediately inform the

police. However, Telecom Security rejected this idea because they thought that there would be too many disturbances.

Thus, at that time, several accusations and investigations were already being conducted against Zündlumpen, all of which did not lead to any results. The discontinuation of the investigation was considered... but then the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) [Germany's federal domestic intelligence agency] intervened...

Ta-da!

...and then the investigations "suddenly" proceeded against three accused, which the police conjured out of the hat after an intermezzo with the BfV. It is not surprising that this passing on of information obviously took place in a very "unregulated" and "non-transparent" manner (the fact that the BfV in particular works in a relatively "non-transparent" manner is no longer a secret, at least since the National Socialist Underground scandal [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg52; now known to have been supported by secret service agents*]). Incidentally, three people are the minimum number needed to legally constitute a criminal organization. While the BfV provided some analyses of Zündlumpen's ideology (insurrectionary anarchism), radicalism and proximity to violence as well as language (the word for cop, 'Bulle', is used so and so often), the State Security cops now investigated three people for the formation of a criminal organization. The BfV provided some background information on the three defendants and put forward the theses that they are all anarchists and that they are all supposed to have connections to the library Frevel (which anyway is a very dangerous and criminal place). In addition, it becomes apparent that the BfV has constructed a fixed milieu of the Frevel library, which was also the focus of surveillance measures. **In this context, the BfV also mentions a number of unsolved crimes and arsons committed in Munich.**

But what do the cops accuse the respective defendants of, or how did they come to be targeted?

"Person 1" of the investigation is accused of having rented a room in which Zündlumpen is supposed to have been produced (a so-called investigative hypothesis, i.e.: a mere assumption without circumstantial evidence). In addition, person 1 is said to be known to the police, to be an anarchist and to know other anarchists. The police found out about the existence of this print space through a coincidental phone call, after which a police patrol drove by the location because of a noise complaint... and other police officers are said to have found out

through a control on the street that anarchist things are printed there a few days later. In addition, another cop is said to have seen Person 1 coincidentally once in the context of unrelated snooping around in the building in question, recognized him, and then inquired about the tenant to the landlord.

"Person 2" is accused of having studied computer science, which is said to be an indication that he has the professional skills to run a NoBlogs blog, which presented the LKA's computer scientists with insurmountable hurdles to de-anonymization. In addition, person 2 is said to have pasted posters twice which are said to have been about similar things as the contents of Zündlumpen (e.g. IAA). In addition, person 2 occasionally writes stupid sayings and exclamations against police officers in the "subjects" of their bank account transfers, which Zündlumpen also does. He is also said to be an anarchist and known to the police.

"Person 3" is accused of speaking French, which is supposed to suggest that she made translations from French for Zündlumpen. In addition, Person 3 is said to have been filmed once inside a church by a surveillance camera leaving a single copy of a Zündlumpen. She also allegedly ordered things from her bank account that could be used for printing things, among other things.

This construction allowed police, the public prosecutor's office and judges to finally initiate surveillance and other monitoring measures as well as to execute house searches in April 2022 that had already been planned for two months. The BfV was also given general authority for comprehensive surveillance measures over this period and beyond. During the house searches, all rooms were always searched, since it was claimed that anarchists would live everywhere, as they would be ready for violence and also would share property among themselves. The fact that some people seemed to live in the apartments who were not previously listed as roommates did not stop them from confiscating laptops, USB sticks, personal letters, etc. from them and taking handwriting samples. There was also a search warrant for the alleged partner of one of the residents, which was not executed.

A Cigarette Butt – Voilà!

After the cops had raced away from the private apartments with dozens of boxes of stuff and all kinds of newspapers, brochures (in short, with all paper that appeared anarchistic) and had taken everything in the print shop that wasn't a chair or a trash can (i.e. tens of thousands of sheets of blank paper, all the machines, thousands of newspapers and books),

they set about analyzing all the objects from the print shop for DNA traces, as if it had been a clandestine bomb laboratory. They took dozens and dozens of samples from printers and machines... and finally found a known DNA trace!

This DNA trace could supposedly be attributed to "Person 4", while at the same time ruling out that any other DNA trace was from Person 4. So person 4 is said to have smoked a cigarette in the print shop... and voilà, person 4 is now also part of the criminal organization. Because person 4 is also said to be an anarchist and known to the police. **The ridiculous accusation of smoking a cigarette in a print shop was enough for a judge to grant a search warrant,** which has not yet been enforced... [it was put into practice a few days after this text was published] and which again says that all anarchist printed matter, personal documents, printers etc. should be confiscated. Interesting: the cops always want to confiscate the WLAN routers in order to evaluate the MAC addresses stored in them.

The Absurdity of It All

The police obviously have an enormous political motivation to break up spaces that are frequented and used by anarchists, which was also shown by their harassment and intimidation of the landlord of the anarchist library Frevel, who subsequently terminated the library's lease. The interaction of the Ministry of the Interior, the Secret Service for the Interior, the State Security cops, and the Bavarian Federal Police (LKA) has the effect that it is sufficient to be an anarchist, to be counted among a group of people, and to supposedly know people in order to be accused of a criminal organization. The Bavarian state is not afraid to create the image of a dictatorship when its henchmen confiscate any anarchist publication and printing equipment, nor to intimidate landlords in a Mafia-like manner and threaten to search their houses if they do not hand over rental contracts. The state is obviously concerned with stifling the presence of anarchist ideas, spaces, relationships, and practices. **The legal aspect of this attempt is significant: the police cannot establish an actual link between any of the now four accused persons and Zündlumpen, let alone the writing of articles. Main accusation:**

the accused are anarchists and allegedly know each other. The investigation direction, which the state pursues, is to construct any circumstantial evidence with hits of DNA traces! They try to find DNA traces of anarchists on printers or single issues of the Zündlumpen or only somewhere in a print shop and then present this as if they are part of the editorial staff of the Zündlumpen. This absurd construction is enough for the public prosecutor's office and the judiciary to wave through any repressive measure and any search and seizure. **This investigative tactic has relevance for the entire Federal Republic: if the cops, judges and prosecutors working here succeed in making the mere accusation that a DNA trace found on a newspaper, a printing device or any object in a print shop is supposed to correspond to the fact**

that you allegedly printed, distributed or even who wrote the articles, then the possession of any anarchist newspaper is a potential crime.

Fahrenheit 451 sends its regards!

The push to substantiate the publishing of a newspaper with DNA traces (like on cigarette butts in a print shop) is a repressive maneuver that concerns us all! The Bavarian state wants to suppress not

only the existence of anarchist spaces and publications, but also the mere possession, reading and printing of anarchist newspapers.

These latest repressive advances in Munich concern all subversives, rebels, anarchists, anti-authoritarians and wild hearts. Because if it is a crime to read anarchist newspapers, then **none of us are innocent!**

Freedom for the printing machines and all prisoners worldwide!

Solidarity and greetings to all others affected by 129 proceedings!

Some anarchist bookworms from Bavaria



POEMS FOR LOVE, LOSS & WAR

I want my grave
to be far from cemeteries
where there are no white blouses
nor pantheons of gold

I want to be buried
up there, high on the mountain
next to that Aleppo pine
standing alone in the ravine

I want my grave to be
between two stone pebbles
my comrades will be the green
lizards, and coloured snakes

I want neither Roman
nor lay priests at my funeral
and the flowers will be
a handful of sharp thistles

I also do not want them
to deliver speeches and psalms
with flags and tinsels,
vice of the civilised world

for the speeches, the squawks
of the crows and the rooks,
the howl of the old fox
abandoned when blind

not the light of candles which
give off a few terrible clarities
I will be illuminated
by thunder and lightning

I want my grave to be
covered by high hawthorns
large and dense brambles
and wild artichoke thistles

that the herbs for the herds
may sprout everywhere around
and that the tired black dog
may rest in my shadow

I want my body to rest
far from the company of man
next to the large pine tree, there
in the solitary ravine.

– attributed to [Caracremada](#) (1906-1963),
anarchist guerrilla of the Catalunan Pyrenees,
saboteur and would-be assassin of Spain's dictator

'NOT FIGHTING THE SAME FIGHT'



[ed. – A transcript from *This Is America #92*, a podcast from the online platform *It's Going Down*. This was released in 2019, the same month in which we put out our statement *'The Future of Return Fire'* with its stated intention for this current volume; a critical investigation of where our project touches and doesn't touch currents that could be gathered under the sign of the Left. Much resonates for us (including – despite the obvious difference in context across the Atlantic – the Left mobilisation around the British Labour candidate during the end of that year, shamefully joined by not a few anarchists; see **'Everything is Sanitised, But We are Constantly Wringing Our Tired Hands'**.) This was a moment of broad calls for an anti-capitalist and/or anti-racist 'Left unity' during the far-right street activity coinciding with a reactionary government; see **'It Depends on All of Us'**. Since these words were spoken, the party of the Left has returned to power in that nation-state; with the predictable results foreseen below.]

TIA #1: We wanted to speak on the topic of the Left, and our relation as either anarchists or autonomous – or people involved in autonomous anti-capitalist, anti-state, anti-authoritarian, anti-colonial movements – and how we relate to the Left. And if we are part of the Left; do we consider ourselves leftists?

I think what's interesting is that, for some of us involved in this project, we became involved in anarchist politics at a time when there was really, I would say, a backlash and a rejection of what we considered leftism. And by that, we mean official organisations and groups that have the legal ability to interact within the State and the economy. So we're talking about official business unions and their bureaucracies. We're talking about NGOs, nonprofits, top-down activists, monolith organisations (Greenpeace [ed. – see **Green Capital & Environmental "Leaders" Won't Save Us**], things like that), and especially the entire apparatus that's evolved around the Democratic Party, whether that's the Left-of-centre media, whether that's people pining for certain positions within the state, whether that's people within nonprofits essentially chasing grant money, and so on and so forth: this entire economy and politics that's based around established political and economic life within the existing system.

And that we saw as opposed to essentially autonomous social movements or revolt itself that

was organically springing up from... however you want to define it, from the exploited and excluded, the proletariat, the working class, the dispossessed masses; whatever kind of label you want to put onto that. We haven't really had like a nerdy discussion on terms, and what all the different tenants within anarchism are, for instance, on the show, but I think a lot of us were influenced by the post-left currents that came out after the fall of the Berlin Wall, after the collapse of the Russian communist project. **And post-left anarchism (or post-left anarchy) was a way to reimagine the anarchist project in a world in which the Soviet Union no longer existed.**

And I think it's interesting when you talk to a lot of leftists. One thing I hear, you know, Marxist [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg11*] socialists, one thing I've heard again and again, is that although the Soviet Union may have been ultimately deformed worker state, or a bureaucratic capitalist monstrosity of repression, as long as it existed, it meant that there was somehow “an alternative to the existing social order.” And I think it's interesting, because you see a lot of the same things; now It's Going Down is sharing anarchist graffiti that's been written by people in Hong Kong [ed. – see *Hong Kong: Its Relevance to the Rest of Us...*], calling the Communist Party a capitalist state and calling out the police. And there are, of course, a lot of tankies¹ and people on the Left that come out and attack this and say, “Oh, they're CIA hacks, screw them.”²

But I think what's interesting at the same time, is that there's a lot of people that listen to It's Going Down, a lot of people that interact with It's Going Down, that are coming at this from a different perspective. They're coming, especially, either after the eruptions that happened in 2016, or the maybe it's the prison strike [ed. – see *'It Depends on All of Us'*], or Standing Rock [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg16*], or the coming to power of Trump or the anti-fascist movement. A lot of people have really embraced the term leftist. And a lot of people have embraced the idea of Left unity.

1 ed. – Pejorative for leftists, particularly Stalinists (see **Memory as a Weapon; Indigenism & its Enemies**), supportive of authoritarian Communist regimes; coined in Britain by dissident Marxist-Leninists (see *'It Depends on All of Us'*) referring to party members who favoured the Soviet tanks that had crushed rebellions in Hungary (see the supplement for this volume of Return Fire; **A Poem by Kenneth Rexroth, Painted across the Rooftops of the World**) and Czechoslovakia.

2 ed. – Similarly to how the Chinese government itself attributed the rebellion to 'outside agitators' (see **Eric Laursen Owes Me a Lamp**) from the West; as it similarly has during a significant rebellion in late 2022 against harsh COVID restrictions, leading to their easing.

I think a lot of that comes from the reality that we are under a far-right authoritarian government. And also, a lot of people interacting with a political space, which has a lot of younger people being activated in a lot of different groups. So you might exist in a small town where you and your five friends might be in the IWW [ed. – see *'It Depends on All of Us'*], and maybe you're anarchists and then you also hang out with some kids that are in the DSA [*Democratic Socialists of America*], or in some sort of Marxist-Leninist group, or PSL [*Party for Socialism and Liberation*] or maybe they're Maoists [ed. – see *'The Position of the Excluded'*]. And you exist in this broad leftist scene and those are the people you interact with.

Whereas before, with a lot of anarchists 10 years ago, that never really would have happened. You didn't really interact with a lot of people that were in those groups. Whereas now it's it's a whole different ball-game. And some of that's because of the situation that's been created with the rise of anti-fascism, and a lot of people are coming together to organise against a broader external threat. And a lot of that's just the situation politically that's been



2022 riots due to Chinese Communist Party zero-COVID policy

created by Trump; all of a sudden, there's a bunch of new people that want to get involved.

We just kind of wanted to have a space to talk about leftism and our relationship to it and tease out some of these things. I think at the end of the day, what I would say is that I think regardless of if you consider yourself part of the Left or not, I think the main question is how we relate to people in struggle, how we relate to bureaucratic and recuperative organisations that don't hold our politics. And also, who do we see as our allies? I think those are the most important questions. And I'll just stop here for a second.

TIA #2: So I think a lot of the discussion around the "post-left" in the last few years has really been a devolved version of where that critique really came from. So we have to think of post-leftism as a critique, right? We have to think about what it names; and to understand what it names we actually have to go back to the 1950s.

So in the 1950s, after World War Two, what happened in Europe was that the Communist Party under the Comintern [Communist International] (which was run by the Bolsheviks, by the Soviet Communist Party), had started a process in which they were essentially trying to purge non-Stalinists from the Communist Party all over Europe. And even in the United States; the Communist Party in the US took this incredibly hard Stalinist turn during that period.

Now, what we have to understand about that period is that communist parties before that weren't like that. There was an element of ideological rigidity, depending on where you were, but generally, communist parties from the early 20th century on into the 1940s were kind of philosophically amorphous. You had your Rosa Luxemburg [*ed. – dissident socialist yet hostile to anarchism, and who tried to erase the latter from the history of May Day; see Return Fire vol.3 pg87*] types, your left-communists [*ed. – usually opposed to popular fronts and electoral politics*], you had council-communists [*ed. – an anti-Leninist Marxist current in Western Europe*] and communist parties, you had IWW members of the Communist Party. And you also had hard authoritarian Leninists in the Communist Party, and they all existed in various factions within these various different communist parties.

What the Comintern did in the 40s and into the 50s, was they started funding the factions that were sympathetic to Stalinism. And then used their propaganda machines (that were built on that funding through newspapers and radio stations and stuff) to

engage in what essentially equated to political purchase. All throughout Europe. This happened in Italy, in France, and so on, Germany. And this was all part of sort of the Soviet Union's attempt to build a political sphere of influence all throughout Europe after World War Two, to combat the American sphere of influence, which was the result of the Marshall Plan [*ed. – American 1948 initiative claimed to aid economic recovery in Western Europe after WW2*].

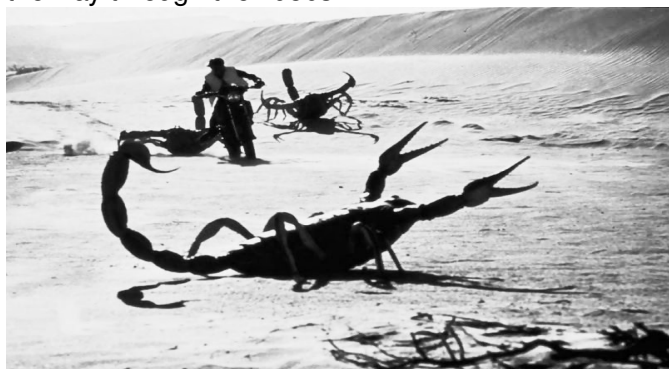
During that period of time, you started getting theorists like [Albert] Camus, or Simone de Beauvoir in France, starting to talk about the problems of authoritarian communism. **And what they were saying, it wasn't so much about the outcomes. It wasn't about the fact that there was repression. It wasn't about the fact that there were mass purges and famines in the Soviet Union; although they definitely mentioned those things. What they were making was an existential critique.** And they were saying, "Look, if we are to embrace the idea of revolt, as this concept in which we assert our existence in the world, then it makes no sense for us to do that inside of a structure (namely, an ideologically-rigid, grand narrative of Leninist communism) which simultaneously also crushes that assertion immediately. All of the problems of the Soviet Union, they were arguing at the time, were really a result of this sort of existential nullification that existed at the core the ideology of Leninist communism; which is one which is grounded in a general narrative of human existence which all of us are supposed to fit within, and we're supposed to construct what Leninists called "the new man"; they had an idea of the utopian person.

And we were supposed to become that person and any objections – any critiques of that – were not only wrong, according to Leninism, but were dangerous, were preventing us from reaching utopia, and had to be purged out of existence. Then what they did was they imposed a normalisation process. They were eliminating difference, political difference within both the Soviet Union and, later, the rest of Europe, or were trying to.

So out of those critiques grew movements like the Situationist International. And the uprising in France in May of 1968 [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg96*]. And out of that grew theorists like Jacques Rancière, who were starting to really push this critique further.

You got Italian autonomism, people like Paulo Virno, Mario Tronti, who are really trying to push this critique further and starting to talk about, how do we have an anti-capitalism which doesn't become ideologically rigid? How do we start to think through the idea of revolt which stays revolt, and doesn't collapse into a normalising concept of a predetermined utopia.

And in the 1970s (late 1960s, and 1970s), in the US, those currents were named the New Left, and you had people like Abbie Hoffman starting to articulate critiques like this. But after the movements of the 60s and 70s died off what was left behind was this rigid, authoritarian leftism that we saw limp along slowly, all the way through the 1980s.



And with the collapse of the Soviet Union, something really interesting happened. Which was, on one hand within the American context, American capitalism declared victory, and said “there are no other ideological options. History has been determined. This is the utopian project from this point forward.”

And that's what we largely live inside of right now. We live inside of a world in which the idea of political possibility has been totally stripped away. But that is simultaneously sort of collapsing and barely functioning at the same time, right? It's this kind of suspension within a state of crisis that we find ourselves in [*ed. – see **Capitalism & Electrification***].

But at the same time, you started having a lot of people saying, “wait a minute, maybe the problem wasn't just Leninism. Maybe the problem was the grand narrative in itself.” Not just the Leninist appropriation of trying to determine the future for everybody in a singular way. But maybe it's that entire enterprise, that entire attempt of trying to determine some utopian future that will sort of normalise everything and have to eliminate all difference, and that move towards that utopia.

Maybe the problem is deciding what the future is. And really, maybe what revolt needs to be, is this kind of explosion of possibility, this kind of breaking out of the particularity of our life, this kind of assertion of our own existence. And picking up this critique from the 1950s, really, that is what post-leftism names. And for

whatever people feel about Bob Black³, you can go back to *Anarchy After Leftism* and that point is very clear; that really, post-leftism was an articulation of that critique, it was a way to articulate an anarchist politics not from a position of political ideology, but from the position of existential theory. The thinking around existence, concepts of ontology,⁴ these ideas of what it means for us to exist in the world as unique people in a time in place around others.

TIA #1: Well, what I would say is that in the current context, especially when we look at the mass

3 ed. – Long-term anarchist author key to post-leftism; best known (aside from works such as *The Abolition of Work*) for his caustic altercations with perceived enemies, most famously with someone outside of the anarchist scene but during which both parties called the cops on each other.

4 ed. – “Ontology comes from the Greek word *Ontos*, which means *being*. Ontology is the study of what is, of what kinds of beings make up the world. Is the world made of fire or water, as the first Greek philosophers pondered? Or atoms or flows, waves or particles? Social ontology asks what beings make up social worlds: the worlds of humans and other animals as we interact, the groups and institutions we form, our conflicts and wars.

As with psychology, if we don't examine our ideas about social ontology, we risk getting stuck in dominant models that hold us back. For example, capitalist valuing often works with a social ontology that looks something like this: the world is made up of two basic kinds of beings, on the one hand, human individuals; on the other, things – animals or inanimate objects. Human individuals are “subjects” who make free decisions. Non-human things are “objects” to be produced, owned, hoarded, exchanged, destroyed. Human subjects are all different, but also all alike, because they share the same basic nature, the same basic structures of rationality, the same needs and interests. These shared reasons and interests lead them to come together and form groups and institutions.

In various forms, this liberal social ontology is now widespread. But it has had to fight against older ideas, e.g., feudal ontologies like those often promoted by the Catholic church, which saw society as an “organic” whole, a social body in which individuals were born into different “estates”, each of which performed different fixed functions. These older ontologies still survive, of course. In some settings, they remain dominant; whilst in many contemporary social theories, liberal and conservative elements blend together.

Another strong current comes from Marxism. In many ways, Marxist social ontologies branch out of the liberal picture. Marxism, at least in most of its variants, is equally humanist: the world is divided into human beings and non-human things that are at our command. It is just as focused on economic production, and on a universalist view of human nature: humans have the same basic needs and interests, above all economic “interests” realised through material things. But pursuing our interests doesn't lead us to form one big happy society; instead, we are grouped into opposing classes.

Both conservatism and liberalism tend to emphasise social peace. In one, stability comes from a

struggles that we see in front of us that define our era (for instance, Standing Rock or Ferguson [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg76*]),



or the prison strike, or, you know, any of these things: by and large, one of the main things that holds them back from from expanding beyond the limits that they reach is the Left. So for instance, Standing Rock, the idea that [then-President] Obama was going to come in and negotiate some sort of settlement and end everything (which of course didn't happen; basically, he just pushed it off until Trump came in and then Trump was able to send the police and so on so forth). If you go back and look before that, obviously, the Obama administration was at war with that struggle trying to defeat it in other ways.

Leftism – if we define it as a collection of bureaucratic entities and organisations and bureaucracies tied to the State and capital – expanding beyond that and allowing your role to get beyond that, and allowing our associations and relationships to grow outside of its control; that is often the barrier in which we find ourselves sometimes not being able to go beyond. Again and again, that's the thing that we recognise the thing to struggle against. It's not always necessarily state repression, although that's of course very real. It's the ability of struggles and movements to grow outside of the control of bureaucratic, top-down, reformist, liberal organisations, which are trying to stifle revolt, trying to stifle self-organisation, trying to stifle and put out autonomy and autonomous forms of relationship building, and also the use of direct action.

What's also interesting, too, just to take this to the

god-given social order; in the other, from universal consent. Of course there is always also war. Holy war against the heretics, infidels, barbarians, and all who threaten social order. War in the name of progress against reactionaries, savages, terrorists, and all who refuse the universal peace of the market and democracy. War is a state of exception from the peaceful equilibrium – though somehow the exception becomes permanent, there are always more barbarians at the gates.

Marxism puts conflict at the heart of social ontology: class war isn't a strange disturbance, it is the very motor of progress. But this war is characterised in a very limited way, as class struggle. The combatants are not diverse and complex individuals, with many shifting desires and allegiances and the power to form their own projects, but economic (or other) categories into which we're slotted by party intellectuals who know our "real" interests" (Nietzsche & Anarchy).

terrain of history: that is always the position that anarchists have found themselves in. For instance, when the anarchists were involved in the First International,⁵ the split with Marx and the authoritarian communists (in which the anarchists rightfully said, "Look, your ideas," Bakunin [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg97*] said famously, "are going to create a red bureaucracy; you're going to create a red dictatorship"). And the split with Marx came because they did not want to get involved in electoral politics. They said, "Look, we can create a stateless and classless society now; we just need to build that movement."

We need to remind ourselves too that at one point anarchism was the dominant, anti-capitalist, radical current within what we would now call the classical workers movement, essentially the broad collection of workers and peasants across the world (that wasn't just white European men in factories, but a broad-speaking movement). **Because you have to remember, anarchism grew and was very popular in everywhere from Africa to Asia to Latin America.** Even if those aren't necessarily the movements and the thinkers that we reference – which we should definitely work to change. Because there's so many thinkers and movements across the world historically that we need to be looking at, not just Spain, and not just people like Bakunin.



24.05.17, Brasília, Brazil: police open fire as anarchists join an anti-corruption demonstration in the capital, destroying more than 3 state ministries by fire

But again and again, throughout anarchist history, control or attacks from especially the Communist Party has been the thing which has kept massive anarchist revolutions and rebellion from growing beyond the point which history shows them to be stopped in their tracks. Whether that's what happened in the Ukraine in the 1910s and 20s, or

5 ed. – International Workingmen's Association; an early try at 'uniting' anarchists with Communists and other Leftists in 1864, splitting in 1872 on anti-state and pro-state lines.

Spain in '36 (and you can go back and listen to our interview with Mark Bray on the Spanish revolution as an example).

But in the current period, this is definitely a huge part of the situation that we're dealing with now; recuperative elements, reformist elements in social movements, trying to stifle things. And I think to think that we're all on the same page, because we're "leftists," is just wishful thinking.

TIA #2: Well, and it all falls into this theme of unity, right? So it's really difficult for a political party (whether it's the Democrats or the alphabet-soup, Communist Party, XYZ wherever you live) to hijack something when there's not rigidity imposed. And actually the hijacking process (and anyone that's ever been around the RCP [Revolutionary Communist Party] or the PSL can definitely see this when it's happening), there's a process of trying to impose rules, and impose limits to say that certain kinds of direct action aren't okay, or we have to take X, Y, or Z political line. And we have to state it in coherent points of unity that we give to the press and blah blah blah. That unity, though, is in itself the very thing that stifles the energy of revolt from being able to take on an inertia [*ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; Barcelona Anarchists at Low Tide***].

And we've seen this time and time again inside the United States. That it's not just on a very practical level that this unity creates a stifling effect. But on a more deep existential level, it's the idea that unity is a primary category that we should all aspire to, is the very thing that stifles us from being able to assert ourselves in revolt, to be able to come to moments of conflict for our own reasons, with our own experiences and with our own tactics, and our own general tendency is towards doing X, Y or Z type of thing. That it's the idea of unity – whether that's a unity inside of the campaign or unity in the sense of Left unity – that constructs this idea that there's a thing that we all have to be a part of. So whether that's the Left, as in the concept of Left unity, or whether that's the idea of a unified Occupy movement⁶ (that anyone that was involved in Occupy... I'm sure you had a few partisans here and there that were really pushing towards the idea of a

⁶ ed. – A movement started amidst anti-austerity feeling after the late 2000's financial crisis, spreading around the world into many urban encampments and some more radical perspectives, often with anarchist participation.

unified Occupy movement that could articulate positions and so on).

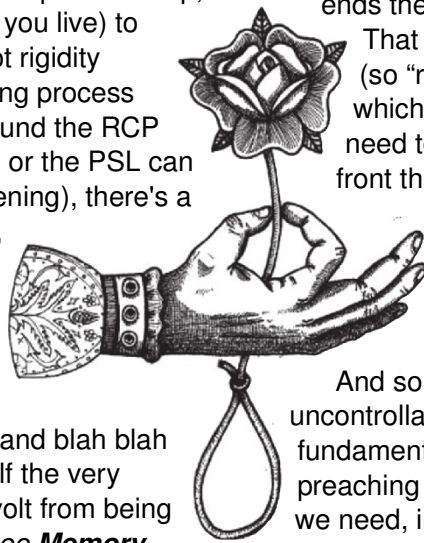
Regardless of the appropriation of the idea of unity, it's the very idea of unity itself, that stifles the difference that is both unleashed in conflict, and that sustains and accelerates conflict. That we have this false notion that we call revolution, as understood in the modern sense, where there's a unified force of people that rise up and impose a new order. **When really what we're missing in that narrative is that there is no unified force; that there's really an innumerable number of people doing innumerable things and incredibly complex moments for their own reasons.** And that later, after the regime falls, a group of people comes in and ends the revolution and imposes sameness, right?

That our idea of revolution, as we call it now (so "revolution" in quotes), is really an idea which is based on this concept that what we need to do is have this kind of absolute unified front that works towards a utopian vision. And it's that very idea that's being critiqued in the concept of the post-left; or it's that very idea that's being critiqued in the notion of uncontrollability.

And so we can't be simultaneously arguing to be uncontrollable, to embrace this idea of revolt which is fundamentally unbounded, while at the same time preaching the gospel of unity. We need difference; we need, in some ways, conflict. We need to be able to have non-sameness in order to both be a part of something as ourselves, but to also allow those things to shift and change and morph with the dynamics of events. **Once we start to impose the idea of unity, what we're really doing is we're creating this vision, this category that exists completely outside of the complexities of what's going on. And we're trying to force moments to fit into our definitions.**

That not only is ineffective tactically; it creates political structures which are fundamentally repressive. And so if we're going to escape that trap, if we're going to escape the failure of revolutionary projects for the last 200 years, what that really means is not only abandoning the idea of unity; but it means abandoning the idea of the grand narrative as a whole.

And that doesn't mean that we can't have affinity towards people. That doesn't mean that we can't work with people that are very different. Hell, I've got plenty of friends that aren't anarchists. But what it does mean is that we are not fighting the same fight that the Democrats are fighting, and we're not fighting the same fight that the DSA or the alphabet-soup



communist parties are fighting. And we might not even be fighting the same fight that a lot of people that consider themselves as anarchists are fighting. That really what we're doing is we're trying to remake the entire way that we engage in action, not based on a ideologically-rigid position, but really based in a notion of unleashing possibility through dynamic conflict. And both engaging in and antagonising those conflicts as we go forward. That's the thing that I think separates this idea of the post-left (and I don't like the term post-left-*ism*, but the post left) from the things that really came before.

TIA #1: I think it also begs the question, who do we see ourselves as trying to work with? And I think that obviously, there is a new crop of social movements and collections of antagonists within a variety of different struggles. For instance, water protectors, black liberationists, prison abolitionists, anti-fascists, anarchists of all stripes, autonomous anti-capitalists of all stripes. Obviously there's a lot of different people across a wide spectrum that we consider comrades and we work with, and obviously who will pop up on It's Going Down. But again, beyond that, I think that a lot of people that consider themselves as part of the Left are really obsessed with this idea that we were talking about: of Left unity, of making all the alphabet-soup groups in the room work together, when a lot of people aren't really putting the time into actually organising or working with people in their communities, or around them in their workplaces, schools, neighbourhoods, so on so forth, that are impacted by the same things that we are; that are getting angry that have no faith in the political structure, are angry at capitalism, can see things are getting worse and want to do something about it. But often, we're so busy trying to sit in the same room with a group authoritarian communists that have nothing in common with us to organise events that aren't even necessarily our cup of tea, when we could be putting more energy into building autonomous forces, that could be on our own terms, and also in solidarity with those around us (that may not even have a political label that are just angry and want to do something about what's going on).

TIA #2: Yeah, this is the danger of movement-ism, right? We have a very abstracted idea in the United States of what political conflict looks like. I think in *Fire to the Prisons* [magazine] there was an article called *We Demand Nothing*, which really articulates this very well. But we tend to fall into these spaces in which we are making a number of assumptions. Namely, that we need large amounts of numbers, that the goal should be to change some kind of policy, or to appeal to somebody or another. And sometimes those spaces can be strategically advantageous. But they should never be the assumption of the way that

we take upon action. Because in those spaces, what happens is that we start to prize the coalition, the popular front. We start to think through the idea of what does it look like for us as a privileged political space to do a thing to try and force a change in some abstracted enemy [*ed. – see **What is Insurgency?***]. Whether that enemy be a corporation, or the State, or whatever.

When in reality, that's never actually how resistance functions. That resistance is really a dynamic of conflict: which occurs in a place, at a time, in a very particular way. And when we move into those spaces, we risk losing sight of all of that. That is what really typifies leftism, as we've understood it in the modern era; which is this incredibly abstracted, remarkably conceptual understanding of really dynamic problems that don't respect the dynamism of those issues.

We can see this, whenever you talk to an authoritarian communist about anything: what will almost immediately happen is they will fall back into their party line to explain any problem. It doesn't matter what it is, it doesn't matter whether the explanation actually really fits; you'll witness a process I like to call shoe-horning where they will sit there and just try and jam an idea into a party line. Not only is that philosophically absurd, but what they're doing is they're trying to say, "look, the particularity of this doesn't matter, the individual dynamics of what's going on don't matter. All that matters is this abstract concept." And from that position, there's no way to be able to think through concepts of effectiveness, strategy, tactics, the immediate deployments of action that we might be thinking through at any moment. There's no way to even gather the information necessary to be able to do that, because we've already come to a position, which makes all of that irrelevant.

But we all know (any of us that have ever spent any time in the streets) that you never carry out effective actions by sitting there and thinking about things in a purely abstract way; unless you're very lucky, and you only become effective by chance. But the actions that are always the ones that are the most effective are the ones that are very grounded in their time and space. And that really requires a dynamism in our thinking, an ability to have conflict and difference, and an ability to unleash possibilities which are just completely impossible and foreclosed upon within traditional leftist politics.

TIA #1: I also think there's a point needs to be made in terms why we get involved in struggle. Why do we engage in solidarity with other people that may be outside of our own circles? And it's to spread revolt and to spread certain forms of organisation and affinity and relationships; to spread anarchy. I don't mean like the sense of chaos and people kicking puppies and something like that which the media likes to portray, but literally anarchy; the destitution of of state power and the economy, and the creation of communal and anti-authoritarian and horizontal forms of power and decision-making, and **actual forms of life that we'd like to spend the rest of our lives in.**

As opposed to what I see on the Left, which is people essentially getting in front of struggle, and trying to recuperate that, and create some sort of reason for existence for their own organisations and trying to get in front of things and take credit for them. I mean, essentially, that's the difference fundamentally in the anarchist project in the Leninist project. The anarchist project is to be part of the insurrection, to further the revolt, to the point in which the forms that the revolt is taking can basically allow new kinds of ways of life to basically be the ways in which we actually live. Whereas the Leninist approach is to get in front of the revolt, and then use that as a way to solidify a new form of state power. And those are two completely different things.

But I think that those also play out in struggle. We can see this time and time again, where people that basically want to create a name or a brand, or advance their own organisation, or just get a bunch of members, or, I don't know, just get a nice flashy photo on the front of their newspaper. They put themselves in front of a struggle, they try to take it over, they try to dominate, as opposed to spreading it. You brought up the Situationists; it's there's a quote by Guy Debord I think about all the time. It says "the representation of the working class is the enemy of the working class." And what that means is that the people that supposedly speak for us, that supposedly represent us, are often our worst enemies, and so much so far is that they're trying to basically act as our leaders, act as the people that actually have our best interest at heart, act as our representatives.

We see this all the time with the Democratic Party. I mean, this is what they're trying to do right now is to speak for the angry, disconnected masses, from millennials to Baby Boomers. And again and again, I they don't really have a solution to the crises that we face in front of us. **But they're trying to be the representative of everyone that that is looking towards the future and sees it; sees a dead end.** And for those of us that are not looking for those representational status form of politics, we've got to

realise that we are very different than the rest of these people that are seeing history play out as this progressive march towards some different form of state power, some different form of capitalism; which is completely the opposite of what we're pushing at.

TIA #2: And this is this is really the crux, right? **I think a lot of the discussion of the Left and the post-left over the last few years has really broken down to a question of people flinging recrimination and their own identities back at each other.** Post-leftism has become, in some ways, a label. And that's really unfortunate; it's become post-left-*ism*. Really, the importance of this distinction is not a word game. And it's not just purely punk rock, DIY, obstinance, or something like that. The importance of this distinction is really a distinction between two fundamentally different approaches to how we exist in the world. One of which: this kind of leftist approach is really grounded in this idea that human life is understandable by any individual in its totality; that there are some universal truth in a deterministic universe that we all exist within and that differences aren't really there. That we all exist within a narrative that is able to be articulated. That we all exist within a future that's able to be determined before it happens; that can be determined by (in the Leninist sense) a group of specialists who are able to tell us how we live.

And whether those are Leninist specialists or whether the specialists come in any other form, that's really a vision of a life which exists in a universe which is already decided upon. **As opposed to this other idea, which is fundamentally the opposite of that; which is the concept that life is fundamentally indeterministic, that we make our future, just like we made history.** That we made history through the innumerable actions that were taken by others, for good or bad. **And that the future can also be up to us, but only if we unleash the possibilities of the present. And only if we do that through a revolt.** And if we refuse the tendency to try and define that, and channel that and turn that into some abstract conceptual utopian project that is meant to completely eliminate the differences that allow resistance itself to be possible.

That's what's really at stake in this discussion, that it's not purely just this question of old stodgy leftists and new hipster post-leftists, and so on. That it is really a fundamental question of whether or not – in a moment of existential crisis, which I think we all feel – whether we are going to do what some have done (which is retreat back into the sort of utopian, ideological grand narratives) or whether we're going to reject that tendency in its entirety, and trying to

reconstruct political resistance under a completely different series of ideas. Which aren't meant to channel that resistance, which aren't meant to have that resistance end in some utopian project; which aren't meant to try and define what people do, and how they do it, or where they come into resistance from. That's what's really at stake, because it's not just a question of some sort of political label. It's really a question of how we understand how we exist in the world, and how that existence interrelates with our own dynamics of revolts and uncontrollability and resistance.

TIA #1: I also want to make a point. I realise that a lot of people are in small towns that are listening to this; a vast majority of people that interact with It's Going Down are sort of new to this whole thing. I'm not saying that your friend down the street that isn't an anarchist, that's a leftist, is your enemy or something like that, or you shouldn't work on a project with them. What we're talking about, or at least what I'm trying to articulate, is not something that's about like rank-and-file people (or your dad that's a member of a union is a bureaucrat or something like that); that's not the issue. The issue is not about rank-and-file people. It's about how organisations that have authoritarian, recuperative or bureaucratic politics act in relation to autonomous and dynamic social struggles and movements which we are part of, which is always trying to recuperate them and take them over and use them for their own means. We're also not arguing you shouldn't work with people of other tendencies or something like that. I don't want people to walk away listening to this thinking that's what we're arguing for, that's not necessarily what we're getting at.

We're trying to... at least what I'm trying to articulate is that what I would like is to see us fundamentally go through a process of thinking about is essentially, who literally are our comrades? And who are we trying to have a conversation with? And who are we trying to build with? Is it just lefty groups? Is it just the liberals at the farmers market, who are slightly easier to talk to you than everybody else? Or is it people that are feeling the effects of capitalism and the state and civilization day to day, and trying to build movements and projects out of those relationships, and with dealing with the tensions in class society and capitalist civilization?

There was a great interview we did with the people involved in Parkdale Organise [*ed. – self-organised rent strike campaign in Toronto*]. The person that we interviewed said, "Look, stop looking to the Left; stop looking to the alphabet soup of groups." A couple of years ago, there was all these climate marches. I remember going to one and it was literally just a sea of different tables of lefty groups where they might

have had like five members and they're fighting over the same group of progressives and liberals that show up to these things; you know, maybe sell a t-shirt or get a new person to sign up to come to their meeting or something like that. Really, there wasn't that much organising there. It was just about people kind of like keeping that thing going, keeping that circle of people going forward and forward, as opposed to like actually organising or actually working on a project that was building some sort of thing as part of a movement or engaging people in the real world.

I think that the point that the people in Parkdale made was well put. They were able to build a really dynamic autonomous, militant, radical organisation out of their neighbourhood and engage in massive tenant strikes. And they did that by organising in a grassroots way, with people that lived in their neighbourhood, as opposed to sitting down with a bunch of liberals and progressives and tankies and saying, "How are we going to make this work everybody?" It wasn't like that. If it had of been, it would have been a fight over who gets the credit. Who gets to be in charge? It would have been a shitshow.

TIA #2: To all those people that are doing active organising; **just like everything else, people can't be reduced to their own political identities.** You might find someone who is a member of an alphabet-soup Communist Party who's actually kind of down; it does happen. A lot of people join those groups, because they're the first group they run across, and they're mad, angry and anti-capitalist and don't know anybody else. And so they join the PSL or something. It definitely does happen.

I think there's always two sort of cautions that I give to everybody. Because when we're venturing out into the world of organising – if that's something one chooses to do, and that's one thing a person can choose to do; there's many other forms of intervention. But if one does choose to venture into that world, you always need to be able to maintain your own autonomy in that space. **If you let that autonomy get away, you will end up becoming a volunteer, essentially. You'll be just one more person handing out flyers or whatever; you'll lose your ability to engage on your own terms.** And always make sure that if you're out there, make sure that you have the ability to engage in your on your own terms. If you cease to have that ability, go start something else, which might be hard and might be difficult, especially for people in small towns, but it is not worth all the time and energy that goes into campaigns when we can't maintain our own autonomy to act as we deem fit.

TIA #1: I also want to point out, the instances in which we do see mass coalitions being formed (for instance, like PopMob in Portland [ed. – *to creatively counter the so-called alt-right*], which is definitely comprised of lefty groups and even some non-profits); the kernel of that, though, is what makes it work is the fact that it's based on an understanding that people are respecting everyone's autonomy, and they're respecting the diversity of tactics [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.6 chap.4; Violence, Non-Violence, Diversity of Tactics*]. That's what makes it work. It's not because it's some top-down leadership, where everyone has this left-wing unity per se where everyone agrees to the same line. It's that there's a tactical understanding that there's an openness to the autonomy of all the groups, and that there's a fundamental agreement based on shared principles, that people are going to respect that autonomy. People are going to respect that people are going to take different forms of tactics, and everybody has a different role to play. But we're all in this together, in that sense that we're all acting in a trajectory together, even though we may choose different forms in which that action takes.

I think that's respectable. And I think that if we're going to engage with people that that should be fundamentally the way that we do that. The work that was put into the so-called St. Paul's principles, which came out of the RNC protests⁷ many years ago, which essentially are just that; that groups, if they're going to work together, they don't work with the state, they don't talk to the police. They don't talk to the media about internal discussions within the movement, and also that there's a fundamental respect for everyone's autonomy and a fundamental respect for diversity of tactics. And also the people engaging those tactics aren't necessarily going to do something that's gonna impact another group, if that's not what they want to do, too.

I think that that's a fundamental, going forward; something that we should probably work harder to

⁷ ed. – Against the political circus of the Republican National Convention; in that year in question, the regular anarchist counter-mobilisation set notable precedents in terms of coordination, strategy, and infrastructure, in front of an almost unprecedented degree of State repression.

reinstitute. Especially, you know, it's interesting; in the past weekend, across the US, while a lot of the eyes were on the Boston so-called Straight Pride parade.⁸ I mean, there was probably five mass anti-fascist mobilizations. There was something in Berkeley wherever about 300 people came out. There was a handful of far-right trolls; 300 people showed up even without nothing on It's Going Down really about it besides some tweets. Lots of people showed up in Hillsborough, North Carolina: 1,000 people took to the streets against the [Klu Klux] Klan. In Madison,



Indiana, there was a couple hundred people that showed up against the Klan, shut down their little "KKK Cookout" of like 10 people with two pizzas, they were shut down. In Boston, there was like 3,000 people that showed up against the Straight Pride parade, which was 100 people at most. These are massive, massive things that are happening still. Some of these things weren't even on our radar here at It's Going Down. It's like, holy shit, this stuff is popping off.

People are getting organised, people are building those relationships. And I think that's great. I think that we can continue to push for those politics of autonomy, of direct action; which to me, are counterposed to top-down, bureaucratic, authoritarian, recuperative politics.

TIA #2: You can – even if you're in a small town, and your five friends are all socialists or whatever – totally organise with them. But that organisation – that process – has to come from a perspective of mutual respect, trust, autonomy. That's the building block. It doesn't really matter whether someone's a member of the PSL, because the PSL, for as much as it tries to present itself as a unitary top-down organisation, in

⁸ ed. – Featuring speakers linked to far-right chauvanists like the Proud Boys, called – on the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall anti-police riots by transwomen and their accomplices which launched (although now is often forgotten by) the Pride march phenomena; see **Reclaim Your Queer Fucking Life!** – to counter Boston Pride.

itself is not that. It's made up of a lot of people with their own motivations and their own reasons that they're coming to this, their own politics; for as much as they want to parrot the party line. They have their own understandings of that; that's just basic existential sort of forms of existence. They're people; they have their own histories and lives.

So it's never a question of never organising with a Democrat or never organising with an alphabet soup communist or whatever. It is a question of the form that that takes; and really thinking through when we're going to take action. Who do we trust? Why do we trust them? What is the context that action is being taken in? Can we maintain our autonomy to be effective when we choose to?

Because we might not; we might choose to just go to marches for a while. And for a lot of people, that's not a bad way to sort of break in, and start to get used to the flow of things. But generally, being able to keep that autonomy, and being able to approach people where they're at (whether that's your neighbours, or the person at the anti-racist meeting, or whatever). Those are choices that you yourself are allowed to make. And we need to be able to be assertive in our ability to make those choices. And to resist the attempts to bureaucratize what we're doing; to turn it into some sort of unitary structure that stifles our ability to resist the way that we feel we need to.

Because that is something that you yourself, and only you, have. And the only way that that ever gets compromised, is if we don't recognise those things as they're happening. And we allow ourselves to be resigned to that fate. Even if that means being out there on your own. Sometimes that's the right decision.

But in most cases, at least in my experience (I've been doing this for a long time), it's not. And most of the best experiences I've ever had come from organising with people that aren't anarchists; that are just neighbours, or people a couple blocks over dealing with gentrification, or people who are resisting police brutality, or people I work with, but not necessarily people who identify politically in the same way that I do. So we have to be very open to that. But we also have to be just as aware of the dynamics of how that's playing out. And who might be trying to come in and bureaucratize what's happening. We have to maintain uncontrollability as a primary principle.

TIA #1: I think the other thing to keep in mind is that, you know what, Trump is not going to be here forever. Much of the Left is going to follow where the Democrats go. And, you know, when the Democrats come to power, you're gonna see a lot of these people that used to be in the streets with us: they're gonna go home for a while. A lot of people are maybe going to try to get a job within the new administration or get a job cozying up to the new people in power, or, pushing within that new administration to make different reforms or demands or something like that. So we need to also think about what happens after Trump is gone; because we're going to continue to do this no matter who's in power, and we need to continue to not lose our momentum and keep building when the Democrats inevitably get into power.

TIA #2: Digging into experiential narrative for a bit; this is exactly what happened in the anti-war movement, 2004 [ed. – see *'Each of Us Picks Our Own Mischief'*]. All the Democrats left and went to go campaign for John Kerry, and then just kind of dropped out. And what we were left with was a group of alphabet-soup communists trying to control an uncontrollable group of anarchists until we got sick of it and just struck out on our own.

TIA #1: The other aspect of that, too, is that this was coming after the anti-globalisation movement when essentially the anarchist political mode of operation had essentially won the day. That's how people organised; horizontal power, affinity groups, spokes-councils, you know, blah, blah, blah, direct action, diversity of tactics, so on and so forth. I mean, obviously, there's a lot to talk about in that; we'll have to do a podcast on the anti-globalisation movement itself.

But essentially, that's what won the day in terms of mass organising. And then 9/11 happened, people got scared, people retreated. And then the anti-war movement began. It was basically dominated by Answer coalition on the West Coast. And on the East Coast, it was United for Peace & Justice, which was not even so much a Marxist-Leninist front group, it was more or less like a progressive (I wouldn't even call it anti-capitalist) peace group.

TIA #2: But when we struck out on our own, one of the things that happened – especially in relation to United for Peace & Justice – was that anarchists asserted their autonomy.

TIA #1: In the face of leftist leadership. So it was a revolt not only of the present conditions, but also a revolt against “the Left” itself.

TIA #2: Yeah, and there were a couple of moments

where those things happened in person, at conventions; where anarchists would walk out, when we were being told that we wouldn't get legal support for direct action. **But what the result of that was, was the building of a lot of the infrastructure and tactics and theory and modes of operation and networks that construct modern American anarchism today;** that we maintained our position of uncontrollability, we didn't allow ourselves to get sucked back into the anti-war coalitions. And really what has happened in the anarchist space: since then, it's never really been the same.

That we went from a group of people that were largely amateurs, especially anywhere outside of the West Coast. We were kids. And we became people that were coherently capable of carrying out relatively effective political action. And to do that at scale. And within three years, we're doing things like the RNC in St. Paul and the G20 in Pittsburgh [*ed. – successful anarchist participation in counter-protests to that summit of world leaders*]. And that has a very direct lineage to things like Occupy.



A lot of the tactics that we're seeing today; those evolved because we were willing to assert our uncontrollability, in a context of popular front politics. What that meant was that we had to go alone. That wasn't a decision that I think anybody that was there for those confrontations inside of the anti-war movement regrets at all; that it was probably the best thing that we ever did.

This is very instructive, in a lot of ways. A lot of us entered the anti-war movement thinking that we would have a space, and asserting a space; and then when we got pushed back we left. **This is something that we all need to be willing to do. It wasn't not scary. It wasn't that we bounce back without any consequences or anything like that. It took years to really find our feet and rebuilt. But**

when we did, we rebuilt on our own terms. And that was the important part. And we carried a lot of resistance movements, not entirely, but a lot of the kind of big headline-grabbing resistance movements, all through the end of the Bush administration into Obama. Because we were willing to strike out on our own.

That's something that even people in small towns, that history is something that we all need to know; because we almost didn't do that. And the present would be very different if we hadn't. And understanding where those thresholds are and when it's time to just cut and go do your own thing is really critical if we want to maintain our ability to be involved in a process of remaking what resistance looks like, and breaking it outside of those tired traditional, bureaucratic, ideological moulds that we were left with after the end of the Cold War.

TIA #1: For sure. People are going to see; there's gonna come a moment like Occupy or like Black Lives Matter where it's going to seem like the sea is going to open. Or like if you were involved in the explosion of Abolish ICE [Immigration & Customs Enforcement],⁹ sometimes these things come and go within the span of a couple months. Even Occupy, which for those that live through it seemed like maybe a decade was really, we're talking about maybe what three or four months. In terms of the camp start and then kind of the rise and fall of the actions and maybe crescendoing with the port shut-downs.¹⁰ But, again, like these explosions, where do they

⁹ ed. – The same year of this recording; to cite 'Melting ICE, Confronting Fash: Your Guide To a Hot Summer' for just one snap-shot of the moment (which in cases shut down ICE centers for weeks): "In just the last week alone, Trump has openly called for the rounding and mass deportation of millions, only days after it was revealed that migrants will now be housed in concentration camps formally used to intern Japanese-Americans during World War II and ICE officials will now no longer officially keep track of how many detainees die in US custody. [...] As this is being written, people have just finished over 24 hours of occupying the area outside of the ICE facility in Portland, Oregon. Protests several days ago took place in Detroit against the potential deportation of Iraqi refugees. In Florida, mass marches and protests continue against the Homestead child detention center, where thousands of children are being held. In Chicago, people are gearing up for marches against several detention centers, while the FANG collective has called for a week of action[...] These upcoming days and weeks of action give us opportunities to gather regionally and build our collective power, experiment, and also offer solidarity to others on the front lines. June 22nd: Demonstration against opening of former Japanese concentration camp to be used for migrants. Rally in Lawton, Oklahoma."

¹⁰ ed. – Targeting the major Pacific ports of Oakland, Portland, Longview, Seattle, San Diego, Vancouver and

come from? A great point that CrimethInc. made on our podcast was that if we remember Occupy, Occupy began with an idea from Adbusters.¹¹ And their original idea was that we were going to choose one demand [*ed. – a presidential commission to “separate money from politics”*]; and if we could agree on this one demand that this could somehow build into like a mass movement around this one demand, and then we would somehow get this one demand met, maybe, and I don't know, it would grow from there.

Interestingly enough, it wasn't until people were attacked on the Brooklyn Bridge when they marched out during the Occupy encampment... because I remember when I first heard about the Occupy movement, supposedly in New York, I was thinking like, “this sounds dumb, it's gonna be like another dumb protest, it's gonna be a bunch of people with crappy signs standing around.” Which was definitely an aspect to Occupy at some points... but like, “this is gonna be silly, who wants to just stand around outside? This is gonna be another lame protest, boo, ha.” But all of a sudden, these people went on a bridge, they got beat up by the cops. And I remember watching... there was a website called Occupy Together, and you could literally at one point, I remember, you could refresh that thing. And you would see new cities popping up that were forming Occupy encampments.

No one knew what the hell was going to happen. No one knew what was going to take place. **But again, where did this come from? It didn't come from “the Left.”** It wasn't the heads of unions, or all these big non-profits, or all these big Marxist-Leninist parties (or “big,” you know, these formations) were sitting down and making this thing happen. No, they hated Occupy. I mean, go back and read from the socialist press, what they thought about the Occupy movement; they hated it, because of its autonomous horizontal nature. They hated the assemblies, they hated that it was basically people coming together, essentially talking about a society and about life and what they were going to do. I mean, they hate that. And they

Long Beach, as well as in Hawaii and Japan, against union-busting maritime conglomerates; Wal-Mart distribution centers were also blockaded in Denver, Salt Lake City and Albuquerque

11 ed. – Canadian non-profit, inspired by artistic subversion but ultimately not a radical project, as their experiment with “grassroots capitalism” – through a slick marketing campaign for their (supposedly) ethically-produced sneakers modelled after corporate giants – shows.

hated the fact that places like Oakland made it very clear: we don't want the police here, we don't want the city here. We're not here to elect anybody into government. We're here to organise ourselves to carry out actions and also to feed people, to have a giant commune in the middle of the city. And that's exactly what happened.

This will be the last point I make. But if we go back to a more contemporary example – again, another important thing to continue to talk about, and we've talked about it here on this podcast many times, and we've had various teachers on this podcast – but the West Virginia teacher strikes that spread across the country. What made them the most impactful is that they came up against the power and control of the unions, and they pushed past it. And that's what made them a movement to be reckoned with, is that the unions came in and said... because originally remember their strikes were illegal. They were essentially going on wildcat strikes. And you know, the government was even threatening to send in the National Guard. There was hints that maybe violence

would breakout; they were really trying to scare these people and they use the unions in part to do it. The union would come back at certain point saying, “hey, now it's time to go back to work.” And people gave them the finger and people took that struggle on their own and moved power from out of their... well actually, it was always in their hands because remember, this really started within Facebook chat rooms and people talking to each other and people talking about their desire to fight back.

I think that if there's going to be a kernel, an ethical starting point for all struggle – especially struggle

that anarchists support, and autonomous anti-capitalists and anti-colonialists – that's really where it starts, is people on their own, in autonomous fashion, getting together and deciding to take action and not being held back by these bureaucratic organisations that tell them no. **I think that, like so many other things, is the starting point for for all revolt that's to come, and any revolt worth its name.**

That's really this long, awkward conversation we're having about leftism. That's really my main point. And at the end of the day, whether you agree with me and you call yourself a leftist or not, I think it really doesn't matter. That's really what's important. I call myself an anarchist.



MEMORY AS A WEAPON

There is a Difference Between a River & a Seaway

An Attempt at Interdependence Storytelling / Worldmaking

Things I was taught in school: Species are self-contained. Evolution happens in isolation. Survival means survival of the fittest, and the most important interspecies interaction is predator-prey; kill or be killed. There is no interconnected web. We are not inherently changed by our interactions with others. Species are definable, clear. The classification system is based in Reason.

Boundaries are there, solid, firm at the edge of my skin. We are not physically attached to each other. You can leave and feel just fine. We can stand alone. "As if the entanglements of living [do] not matter."¹ We can be separated from the things that keep us alive.

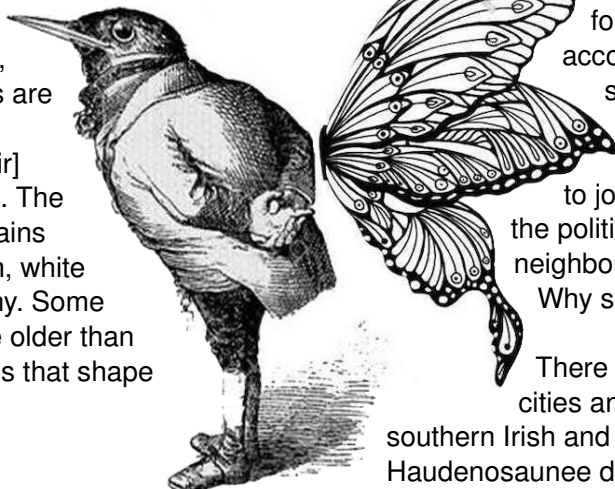
I Am Trying On New Ideas

When I'm feeling open to the world, I can feel how you're feeling.

When I'm feeling open to the world and grounded in myself,

I can feel how I'm feeling and how you're feeling and I know where to go.

Our bodies rely on the physical presence of other humans for regulation and steadiness. My immune system is not self regulating. "Human physiology is (at least in part) an open-loop arrangement, an individual does not direct all of [their] own functions. A second person transmits regulatory information that can alter hormone levels, cardiovascular function, sleep rhythms, immune function, and more – inside the body of the first. The reciprocal process occurs simultaneously; the first person regulates the physiology of the second, even as [they themselves are] regulated. Neither is a functioning whole on [their] own."² We are connected. The emotional parts of our brains evolved before capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy. Some parts of our emotions are older than the socio-political systems that shape how we express them.



1 Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*

2 Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*

There is a seaway that connects my two homes. It was a river and they dug it deeper and now part of it is a seaway. The water flows. The lakes are growing more shallow. I follow the river from one home to the other. Stand outside of a bar, beer in hand, surrounded by three generations of the closest thing I'll ever have to "my people." The descendants of Irish, Italian, and Polish Catholics who dug up their own roots, became settlers, and figured out how to benefit from colonialism and genocide.

The year the Titanic sunk, my great-grandmother turned 17 and got on a boat to cross the ocean. No one in my family can tell me why she immigrated. Maybe she was escaping poverty or seeking adventure – maybe both. The more I read about Irish people of her generation, the more I realize how far back the uprootedness goes [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg87*]. Capitalism has a long history.

Prolonged separation affects more than feelings. A number of somatic parameters go haywire in despair. Because separation deranges the body, losing relationships can cause physical illness.³

My great grandmother was sick by the time she made it across the ocean. She was sick and she still got papers, even when others didn't. She got papers and made choices to forget the poverty and the anti-colonial struggles back home. Her kids bought stolen land and assimilated.

She died before I was born and so, I have no memories of her. **But her choices have shaped my life.**

How much agency do we have over the choices we make? How much can I hold her accountable for? What does holding her accountable even mean? Why did she support her husband when he was down at the mill protesting against Black people who wanted to join his union? Why did she support the politician who fought to keep her neighbourhood white? Why stay with him? Why stand with him?

There is a story I want to write about two cities and a river. It is populated by southern Irish and Sicilian diaspora. Its foundation is Haudenosaunee dispossession. Created by displacement and imperialism, these are places of

3 Ibid.

empire building and genocide. Here the steel mills witnessed the Great Migration. Now their shells look over casinos. Once industrialized, now de-industrialized. Memories are held in dirt, as forget-me-nots and mugwort plants flourish in abandoned factory yards. Memories are held in lung cells and broken down houses with white absentee landlords and counter tops that didn't stay clean until the mills closed. This is, and is not, my story.

Disturbances & Revolutions

[A] disturbance is a change in environmental conditions that causes a pronounced change in an ecosystem... Deciding what counts as a disturbance is always a matter of point of view.⁴

My friends have started playing with the word revolution again; not "the rev" [*ed. – i.e. singular; see 'Not Fighting the Same Fight'*], but revolutions and revolutionary change. We try it on to see how it feels. **Words are hard, definitions are hard. Revolutions disturb the worlds that make up our lives. But, what counts as a disturbance?** What is a pronounced change? When is that change something we want? What is the difference between change and harm? What are revolutions? Maybe there are only moments when things speed up and change happens faster. **It is hard to find a strategy because the destination is unclear. What are our goals? Who are we, anyways?** We search for new orientations, new possibilities.

The idea of permanent conflictuality has become a joke or a trope. Maybe we should say permanent engagement. There still isn't a utopia or an end. It's going to look like constantly engaging with what's going on around us.⁵

Not a utopia, but a direction, a horizon.

According to Stephanie Phillips, "the [Saint Lawrence] Seaway had been the long-standing dream of both Canada and the U.S. as a means of improving shipping on the St. Lawrence and of exploiting the river's potential for hydroelectric power."⁶ It was dug out to carry grains grown in the Midwest US to markets in Europe. "The need for cheap haulage of Quebec–Labrador iron ore was one of the arguments that finally swung the balance in favor of the seaway."⁷ The Seaway as a hydro-electric power project, involved creating a dam that flooded about

49,000 acres of land.⁸ The project was finished in 1959.

This is a story about the Seaway. **It is part of many overlapping stories. Stories of displacement, dispossession and disturbance.** The story of the Seaway includes the story of the people in the community of Kahnawá:ke who had 1,262 acres of land stolen and whose access to the river was cut off when the Seaway was dug out.⁹ "The construction of the Seaway was an attack on the community's land base and resources, its political autonomy, and its way of life."¹⁰ Ahkwesáhsne had 130 acres of land stolen.¹¹ In total, about 11,000 people were displaced by the Seaway. Humans, animals, and biological ecosystems were altered forever.

This is an international story that crosses U.S.-Canadian lines; an inter-provincial story as it affected both Ontario and Quebec, and a story of the abrogation of long-standing treaties with the Mohawks of Akwesasne and Kahnawake. The story began late in the nineteenth century, heated up considerably throughout the early part of the twentieth, and became a defense imperative for both Canada and the U.S. during World War II. It is a story of political alignments and realignments, big business lobbies, grassroots social protest, community loss, and environmental change in rewriting the landscape of the St. Lawrence River.¹²

The story of the Seaway includes the stories of the canals that closed when it opened. It is the stories of the neighbourhoods around the closed canals that experienced economic shifts and population changes. It is the stories of the 22,000 people employed between 1954 and 1959 to work on "one of the largest civil engineering feats ever undertaken."¹³ It is the stories of the 200 odd employees for the Seaway Corporation who almost went on strike in 2014 over proposed automation of the lock system and fear that it would put them out of work completely.

The Seaway drastically changed the landscape between Montreal and Lake Erie. New canals were dug out, new locks installed. New islands made from the dug up river bed appeared. Whole villages ended up underwater. Called a great water highway, the Seaway is an infrastructure project that cost tens of

8 Rosemary O'Flaherty, "Damming the Remains: Traces of the Lost Seaway Communities"

9 Phillips, "The Kahnawake Mohawks and the Saint Lawrence Seaway,"

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 O'Flaherty, "Damming the Remains"

13 Roger Benedict and Pierre Camu, "Saint Lawrence River and Seaway" Encyclopedia Britannica

4 Tsing, *Mushroom*,

5 Conversation with IC, Fall 2017.

6 Stephanie Phillips, "The Kahnawake Mohawks and the St. Lawrence Seaway"

7 "Saint Lawrence Seaway", Wikipedia

billions of dollars. The Seaway both is and is not the river. You can't swim in the water. There are signs warning people to not get too close to the locks. You can't fish in the Seaway. "There are many unseen dangers in and around seaway channels."¹⁴

What kind of river will the Saint Lawrence become when the Seaway ceases to be profitable? What futures are possible in the deeper waters and new locks that run from the ocean all the way into the Great Lakes? This project has permanently altered a landscape and everything that moves through it. How can we find the "life promoting patches" that persist in the aftermath of a colonialist and capitalist project, a disturbance like the Seaway?¹⁵

There is a vacant lot in a city near the Seaway. A vacant lot in a "revitalizing post-industrial neighbourhood." Revitalized is the word for "there is capital moving through there again." The abandoned factories have become art studios and tech start ups and condos. This vacant lot persists. *The lot is covered in mugwort plants. It's the summer of 2011 and there is a crowd of people coming. You and I dart out in front of the crowd, carrying a big banner. We scurry up to a huge wooden advertisement for brand new condos and spend ten minutes trying to figure out how to drape the banner over the billboard. We succeed, only no one can read the banner because it won't hang cleanly, but no one can read the billboard anymore either – a small act against gentrification.*

Two days later I go back to the lot. I bask in the sunshine and pick a few mugwort plants. The banner is still there, flapping on the front of the billboard. I head home to stuff the mugwort into jars filled with cheap vodka. To let them sit in my cupboard for the rest of the summer until they become tinctures. The banner stayed up for months.

Vulnerability & Interdependence

The "bob-tailed" squid is known for its light organ, through which it mimics moonlight, hiding its shadow from predators. But juvenile squid do not develop this organ unless they come into contact with one particular species of bacteria, *Vibrio fischeri*. The squid are not born with these bacteria; they must encounter them in the seawater. Without them, the light organ never develops. But perhaps you think light organs are superfluous. Consider the parasitic wasp *Asobara tabida*. Females are completely unable to produce eggs without bacteria of the genus *Wolbachia*. Meanwhile,

14 The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, "Tommy Trent's ABCs of the Seaway"

15 Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*

larvae of the Large Blue butterfly *Maculinea arion* are unable to survive without being taken in by an ant colony.¹⁶

Interdependence is a fact of our lives, but a fact that capitalism obscures through alienation and stories of self-containment. Interdependence is a web of messy necessities that humans, animals, and biological ecosystems build together. **Interdependence isn't necessarily good or bad, it just is.**

Interdependence can be scary because it means we need others: other people, other animals, other plants, other ecosystems, and maybe other solar systems.

Interdependence is a form of vulnerability. We cannot meet all of our needs on our own. Interdependence just is, but how we relate to it can change. How we navigate interdependence says a lot about our political maps.



Individualism & Anarchists Who Are Not Men

In the early heyday of anarchism, anarchism women, namely Emma Goldman and Voltarine De Cleyre, saw the individual as the base unit of society and understood the individual as the primary actor in resistance. They posited anarchism as a way for the individual to be at the center of social organization, as opposed to (both left wing and right wing) governments that promoted conformity and the "will of the majority." Emma and Voltarine also wrote about the roles delegated to women in society and the problems created by these roles.

In "What I Believe," Emma writes, "marriage, or the training thereto, prepares the woman for the life of a parasite, a dependent, helpless servant." A century later, women perform the majority of the caring and reproductive functions in society, even in countries that have embraced a certain flavour of feminism and "equality" for white cis [ed. – see **Reclaim Your Queer Fucking Life!**] women.¹⁷ These social roles and tasks are still considered invisible, inferior, and are devalued.

16 Tsing, *Mushroom*

17 Reproductive in the larger sense, not just child-birth, though also that.

People who are not men and not white, globally, experience the majority of the violence and exploitation meted out by the capitalist, patriarchal, and white supremacist system we live under. This violence does not affect people evenly. White supremacy means that many white cis women in the US and Canada have pushed much of the reproductive work that their mothers performed onto the backs of women of colour, so that they can succeed in their capitalist careers. They have done this by accessing wealth and government programs that bring migrant women to the US and Canada to take care of white children. **They have done this by supporting the government, the military, and the prison industrial complex. They have paid their taxes and rallied for the state to fix the problems they face. Though my great grandmother was one of those migrant women, she was given a way out. The generations of women in my family since her have been complicit.**

It is no surprise that even in this context where some white women in the US and Canada don't perform certain kinds of care and reproductive work, patriarchy still teaches us to assign care labor to women, cis and trans, regardless of (although differently, depending on) race and class. Growing up, I was often put in the role of paying attention to the emotions and needs of the people around me to the detriment of my own emotions and needs. **Even as a white girl raised in this context, I knew that women were supposed to take care of others and suppress their boundaries and desires, mostly in relation to men.** Becoming an anarchist didn't change the gender role assigned to me, it simply made me more aware of it and gave me a drive to try to change the world that made (and makes) me.

Some anarchist women in my life have found reprieve from the gendered care imperative in tendencies of anarchism that are anti-communal and anti-collective, tendencies of anarchism that heavily emphasize the individual. The logic says, I just have to stop thinking so much about other people and I just have to stop doing all the dishes for my (male) roommates, and I will be free of the care imperative. I think Emma and Voltarine wouldn't disagree. If the individual is the primary actor in resistance, this perspective makes sense.

But, I can't change things on my own. Even if I kill the Man in my head, there will still be men in the world who will hand me a broom and vomit their emotions into my lap. If I succeed in avoiding certain kinds of care labour, it will likely be mostly because I am white and can access money and jobs that make the avoidance possible. This avoidance often comes at

the expense of other women elsewhere in the world. The care labour doesn't go away. I just stop being the one doing it.

And so, I am skeptical. Embracing individualist anarchist tendencies involves opposing values like community, connection, and cooperation. It promotes self-containment and ignores the ways that we need others and they need us. It ignores the ways we are still interconnected. I don't want false individualism to be my only option to deal with patriarchy. Interdependence is too real to me. Individualism, even when its anarchist, cuts me off from other people who nourish me and cuts me off from collectivities that sustain me.

While we may not be able to eradicate the systems that imprison us immediately, we stand a far better chance if we don't get tricked into thinking our struggles or the solutions to them are individual. The more ways we find to act in honesty with each other, whether in sorrow or in excitement, the stronger and more resilient we become – individually and collectively.¹⁸

Witches

Some anarchists have found respite from the care imperative through valorizing the social roles that are generally assigned to women, like care work and healing work. They tell us we need to heal ourselves from the systems that fuck us up, and a part of me buys it. Heal yourself so you can heal the world from all the things that are killing other people, killing other-than-human creatures and plants. Healing work is the revolution, they say. I'm drawn to it, but it feels like something is missing. What do we mean by care and healing? Who can do it? How?

Sometimes this too feels so individual. It tends to look like herbalism businesses and witchcraft-as-fad. It looks like psycho-therapy and rhetoric about self-care. It looks like active listening workshops and making up rituals. **None of those things are bad on their own.** Some of it is even about creating some sort of culture, something not-just-individual, but it still feels like grasping at straws, especially when it's white women doing it.

Our experience is that often people want to rush to talking about magic, animal spirits, literally hearing words from trees, that sort of thing, while skipping over the long, hard work of getting to know their landbase on its own terms. Similar magical practices exist in various indigenous landbased traditions around the world, but for settlers (especially white settlers) living in the land called North America, we need to appreciate just how gone those traditions are for us. They are

18 "Self-Care: Self as Other", Crimethinc

really really gone. There isn't an older, earth-based culture for settlers still clinging to existence on the margins of industrial society... There is nowhere for us to escape to when we realize the lives and worldviews we have been given are crap.¹⁹

We went out east to support a struggle and one night our host made tea as we sat on the floor, prodding sore muscles and sharing stories. They asked what kind of tea we wanted. I was in the middle of writing this piece and they had mugwort tea so I asked for that. I woke up in the middle of the night with terrible cramps. Couldn't get back to sleep, worried about blood stains and ibuprofen availability. My period wasn't due for another day or two. I had forgotten that mugwort can induce bleeding. The plant has historically been used for liver disorders and as a digestive bitter, but it is also an emmenagogue. Try to slow down, I told myself, you don't know much, remember? Figure out who you are.

Mugwort likely came to the so-called Saint Lawrence region via Jesuit clergy who used it as food and as medicine. It has flourished there ever since. A sign of colonialism and the violent mixing of worlds it brought about, mugwort won't grow if you plant it. It takes root along roadways, in clearcuts and brownfields, in vacant lots, sucking up the nitrogen in the soil.²⁰

Mugwort's latin name is *Artemisia vulgaris*. The goddess Artemis, or Diana, is often depicted as a huntress with bows and arrows. **We tell stories about the plants we see, connecting them to human histories, in part to remember their effects on us.** Artemis, goddess of the hunt, supposedly a virgin, associated with a plant that is known for bringing back an absent period. Artemis has meant so many different things to so many different humans over so many centuries. A huge number of those stories are gone, or passed down in traces only intelligible through the systems of violence that structure our everyday lives.



What can we find in sifting through the stories? **We are trying to find the rough edges of capitalism. We are trying to create forms of care against patriarchy. Teaching each other to slow down and listen, and sometimes to speed up and change.**

What does it mean to just stop care? That's a question. There are care strike questions.²¹

On a physical level, a care strike is impossible. If we stop caring for others, we stop caring for ourselves. Care is a physiologic process. Care is my immune system regulating yours. But also, intentions matter. Intentional care is more than a physiologic process. Intentional care is both physiologically and strategically necessary. But care on its own is not enough. We also need to fight, but we cannot give up caring in the process. We need care and combativity!

An Attempt at Being For Something While Being Embedded in Many Things

The combined effects of human activity over the millennia include the creation of extensively altered, highly cosmopolitan species assemblages on all landmasses.²²

I want to foster chaotic decentralized decision-making. I want worlds where many different forms and ways of life can all exist at the same time. I want "a multiplicity of decision making spaces pervading all moments of life" that "allows different, even conflicting, decisions to be made at different points."²³ It isn't all about what I want. I am embedded in an entangled world in which "all organisms make ecological living spaces, altering earth, air, and water."²⁴

Humility seems important here. "If survival always involves others, it is also necessarily subject to the indeterminacy of self and other transformations. We change through our collaborations both within and across species. The important stuff for life on earth happens in those transformations, not in the decision trees of self-contained individuals."²⁵ We have so much figuring out to do. We can strategize without pretending to be making a blue-print for the

19 "Interview with Knowing the Land is Resistance", Black Seed: Issue 4

20 Gina Badger and Dori Midnight, "In & Out of Time: An Interview with Dori Midnight"

21 Conversation with IC, Fall 2017.

22 Nicole L. Boivin et al, "Ecological consequences of human niche construction: Examining long-term anthropogenic shaping of global species distributions."

23 Peter Gelderloos, *Worshipping Power: An Anarchist View of Early State Formation*

24 Tsing, *Mushroom*

25 Ibid.

world. We can have conviction in our beliefs, while staying grounded in our relationships.

Capitalism attempts to control our entire lives. It attempts to be totalizing, but it can't. Capitalism tries to direct all of our relationships towards productivity and commodification, but it can't. Capitalism makes us think that we are alone. Capitalism destroys the relationships we need to survive. In some moments, we can escape its grasp, but those moments can feel few and far between.

I keep thinking about the Irish Famine of the 1840s and 1850s, about how capitalism creates famines and colonialism creates death and destruction.²⁶ My great-grandmother grew up knowing people who survived the famine. She grew up in a world so changed by the specter of the famine and followed a migration path intimately shaped by the fact of the famine. The story of the famine is intertwined with my story. We are shaped by processes that are so much bigger than ourselves and yet, we have a responsibility to act with integrity, to do what we can to understand and change our contexts.

*We started organizing neighbourhood contingents for the annual anti-capitalist May Day [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg87**] demonstration when it was impossible to take the streets without the cops arresting everyone right away. We didn't believe in asking for permission, didn't believe in giving the police the route of our demo, and so they declared our demonstrations illegal and gave us all \$600 tickets. We didn't want to just walk into a kettle every time we took the streets, so we started casting around for another solution.*

We met up once a week to strategize and make decisions collectively. We ate meals together. We talked and talked and talked. We settled on inviting all our friends to meet us in a park near the main demonstration. We would walk together in the streets and see what happened: no facebook, no listservs, and no cops. It worked, sort of. We had fifteen not-so-glamorous minutes together in the streets before we dispersed. We tried again a couple months later and managed to double our numbers with the same tactics.

Looking back, I want to find bigger and more shared goals, not as a precondition for planning together, but

26 ed. – To call this event a famine is somewhat inaccurate: despite the potato blight, throughout all these years sufficient sufficient grain, cereals and livestock in Ireland to solve the problem, but all these were exported to England. The same century saw the British Empire impose starvation many times in so-called India (and not only); when drought struck the Deccan plateau, there was still sufficient rice and wheat in the country; but, aid denied, it was exported to England in record-breaking quantities.

as part of the process. Not to unearth a fictitious unity [ed. – see '**Not Fighting the Same Fight**'], but to know our differences and work together anyways when it makes sense, instead of assuming that we all think the same things. I want more than protest movements, even while I find value in being in the streets together. I want the men in the group to stay after the meeting and talk through the tears and the emotions that came up in that collective organizing context, even when its scary. I want those of us who are not men to step up to the front, masks up, and push the confrontation to another level, even when we're fucking terrified. I want struggle that is both more rooted in place and more expansive in solidarity. I want a clearer acknowledgement of our interdependence and a better understanding of our histories.

Questions of Scale

I think one of the big questions I've been trying to answer as an anarchist is 'what is the relationship between the personal / interpersonal and the "struggle" writ broadly?' What is this relationship, how does it work, is there even really a separation between the two?

In attempting to answer these questions, I have become confused about scale. I know I'm not the only one. "The ability to make one's research framework apply to greater scales, without changing the research questions, has become a hallmark of modern knowledge."²⁷ I've been trying to answer my question by only scaling up.

I was raised by a white second wave feminist. She didn't teach me that the personal was political, but feminism was the first "ism" I felt affinity with. I was assigned female at birth and while I don't necessarily feel excited about that, I've never felt driven to change my assigned gender or sex. I have been a tomboy since I was a kid and knew that my dad wanted a boy and not a girl, an understanding which strongly encouraged me to become a jock in order to bond with him. It helps that I was good at sports, but, for me, it also meant that traditional Western forms of femininity have always felt alien. However, even as a tomboy, I was raised as a girl in a patriarchal world and that world says that women focus on the interpersonal.

So, I have always been drawn (and pushed) towards conflict mediation, emotional support, and analyzing the complexities of interpersonal relationships. I have known for a long time that these skills are undervalued and underpaid, because they are seen as women's work. Twitter campaigns like #giveyourmoneytowomen are appealing. They make

27 Tsing, *Mushroom*

the argument (among others) that women are regularly doing unpaid emotional labour for men and thus, should be compensated for it.

However, I want to abolish work, not find more ways to commodify my coercively gendered skill-set. It took getting halfway through an application process for social work school for me to realize that going into an industry where the job is (supposedly) about emotional skills wasn't going to work for me. But I digress. It's not as if I'm not using those skills doing customer service.

I generally feel capable of reading and interpreting the interpersonal dynamics in my communities and processing my feelings about all of it. I have done material and emotional support for friends and folks in my communities over the years. I have facilitated accountability processes and meetings and mediated conflicts. **I genuinely believe that if people in my communities all got better at these skills, bigger changes would become more possible. But it is hard to be clear that changing oneself isn't changing the world.**

I keep trying to find a way to scale those skills up. To make them be the "struggle." And in the process I confuse changing myself with changing the world. Does this scale of change count as revolutionary? The reach feels so short. Interpersonal care as a skillset is important to me. Yet the kinds of revolutions that change many worlds all at once, and not just the one in my living room near the Seaway and the vacant lot that is no longer full of mugwort, I can't make those happen on my own. Changing myself, and my ecosystem of friends, doesn't make those happen.

Lately I've been feeling pretty insecure about how hard I find it to do "big picture political thinking." Some people around me have gotten really into thinking about strategy and trying to figure out how to do revolutionary strategy. I keep getting so lost. Holding on to "what's really happening in the world" is hard, keeping track of "what we need more of" writ broadly is tricky.

On the one hand, I want to fight my feelings by bolstering the political importance of the things I am good at. Telling the demons in my head that its the fucking patriarchy that is teaching me that my lean towards the interpersonal, towards the community relationships, is less important than this "big picture thinking." Take that story and turn it into the idea that

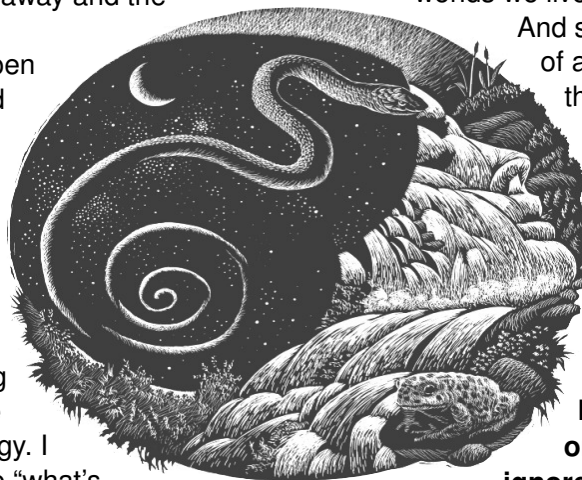
"relationships are the most important" and preach that, in order to make myself feel better. I find lines in books like, "because our minds seek one another through limbic resonance, because our physiologic rhythms answer to the call of limbic regulation, because we change one another's brains through limbic revision – what we do inside relationships matters more than any other aspect of human life" and try to use them to feel better.²⁸ I read all the blog posts and tweets about care and conflict resolution and the intricacies of accountability processes, about how to set good boundaries and how political that is, and I feel so conflicted.

I don't entirely buy the story. The one that says that the invisible, interpersonal work in our organizing is the most important, is the work. I know that it is often the least valued, but I don't think we should create a new hierarchy in order to combat that lack of value. Am I making a big deal out of nothing important? I feel like I have to pick a side, pick a problem. It depends on who I'm around, what my context is. I'm trying to only talk about myself, but if I'm understanding what interdependence actually is then my story isn't just about me. It's messier than that.

It's here that anarchist individualism and very interpersonally focused anti-oppression organizing converge. It feels to me like some strains of individualist anarchism that focus on the joy we feel in the attack and the innate drive individuals have to revolt, the strains that completely ignore the social worlds we live in, they're missing the point. And so are the fairly liberal forms of anti-oppression politics where the only avenues of political action are focusing on changing our inner worlds, and calling out fucked up interpersonal dynamics. In both cases, moving towards revolutionary horizons feels like a thing we stop talking about. **In both cases, we focus only on the smaller scales and ignore the bigger ones.**

It's here where I keep coming back to care and combativity. Bringing about the changes we want to see in this world isn't easy. The violence of this world already affects some people more than others. We need to step up our game at both taking care of each other and building a force to be reckoned with, a force that can take down the violent systems that structure our worlds. We need a multiplicity of

28 Lewis, Amini, and Lannon, *General Theory*



approaches, happening at different scales, over different time frames.

Transformation Through Encounter²⁹

How are we always already changing each other? We transform the radical communities we inhabit (although its not a bubble) with the fucked up behavior we learned living under patriarchal capitalist white supremacy (precisely because its not a bubble). We change ourselves in noticing how the people around us feel, the moments that can feel like obligations and restrictions on our freedom, but are actually the inescapable reality of our interdependent lives. We are porous people and porous communities; leaking, patchy, and overlapping.

Love alters the structure of our brains.³⁰

My emotions always come flooding back when I cross the river. Being in that city, I deaden my senses and numb my emotions, but they always come back. This both is and is not my life and the self-contained fantasies I inhabit in one city explode in the other. But the act of crossing brings me back into my body and the act of crossing together transforms the worlds so that they are no longer self-contained. They never were anyways. He feel my emotions coming back as we cross the bridge and puts his arm around my shoulders. "Because limbic states can leap between minds, feelings are contagious, while notions are not."³¹ I like the weight but I feel conflicted about it. This trip left a weird taste in my mouth. My mom liked him too much and huge parts of me felt unseen. There are ways that being close with men transforms my relationships with the people in my life who are not men, transforms my relationship with myself, and not all transformations are leading us in liberatory directions.

We have made new annual traditions, finally, after years of living in a city that is a second (or third or more) home for many of us. We start gathering in the fall, usually late in the fall, after the first snow. We spend our first meeting talking about how amazing it is that this project continues to exist in this form. We marvel at how meetings feel when we exclude cis men. Then we frantically, quickly, pull together the logistics needed to bring at least one hundred people out to the river on a major holiday to yell and wave across prison walls. Our plans are always more ambitious than our outcome, but, for years now, we have spent that holiday darting through snow, ice, and freezing river-wind, trying to outrun the cops in order to be near enough that people can see us from their barred windows. Fireworks shoot from our shaky

29 Tsing, *Mushroom*

30 Lewis, Amini, and Lannon, *General Theory*

31 Ibid.

fingers. Throats sore from singing and shouting. Blankets and banners and sometimes hot cocoa with marshmallows in tow. The highs and lows of my anxiety tempered by the cheers from now-almost-familiar faces behind bars, behind fences.

It always makes me think about my father. He loves forging collective traditions in a world that is so alienated. He is no feminist, but he taught me how to draw people together. Going to that bar, on that day, knowing he'll be there with his friends who are also his family, friends whose fathers were friends with his father. Following him there, wondering who is going to say something fucked up and whether I'll say anything back. Talking to his friends, who are more like my uncles, and we always talk about my other home. How long have you been there now? When are you going to move home? These days I have two homes.

Confrontation & Conflict are Missing from the Stories About Care

We don't read care into the stories about confrontation and conflict. We don't read confrontation and conflict into the stories about care.

If we want to engage with confrontational demos, we must organize ourselves and relate to one another in ways that allow us to work through the trauma and fear that grow out of our encounters with the police. We must figure out what it looks like in practice to focus more on care, support, emotional openness, and reflexivity in our mobilization and organizing for confrontational demos... By organizing to support one another, we hope to provide a basis for more people to feel able to participate in confrontational demos, and more confidence for all of us to be combative in all the ways that we know are necessary.³²

We need a wider range of tactics.

We need new strategies.

We need all the emotions.

That's why I get so angry at the colonized fantasies of so many white middle-class feminists, that we should simply wish ourselves back to those ancient non-violent matriarchies or non-conflictual communal bands. That using uzis or building a clandestine liberation culture is 'playing men's game', is 'using tools of the patriarchy'.³³

I am searching for traditions that are not just about drinking and finding the people who are most like me.

32 "Dear comrades in the streets", a flier handed out at a demo against police on March 15, 2014 in Montreal.

33 Butch Lee, *The Military Strategy of Women and Children*

Taking Mugwort Can Cause Lucid Dreams

Dream one: Mugwort grows in vacant lots in a “revitalized” post-industrial neighbourhood near the Seaway. Mugwort ripped up to make way for condos. We lose all hope and give up.

Dream two: Mugwort in vacant lots is ripped up to make way for condos. Neighbourhood residents resist. Light fancy cars on fire and smash windows. Band together to cook for each other and watch each other’s kids. The fight is not over. The fight is not enough. The fight is perhaps a practicing stage for bigger fights to come. Fighting gentrification is not necessarily the same as fighting colonialism and capitalism.

Dream three: Mugwort in vacant lots is ripped up to make way for condos. The mugwort pops up in the lawns of the condo-dwellers causing allergic reactions and hayfever. The mugwort makes it impossible to grow well manicured lawns. The condo-dwellers stop paying their mortgages and the housing bubble pops. Changes are happening fast. People start to squat empty condos in an effort to build an anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal resistance struggle.

Dream four: We succeed in creating bad-ass revolutionary connected-worlds-crews of people who aren’t cis men. Our self defense is a form of offense and we treat it as such. We are building anti-colonial liberated spaces and moments in the patches where capitalism grows thin. We relate to our interdependence as a liberatory form of life that sustains our relationships and shapes our responsibilities. We are shifting and burning as needed. We are full of confrontation and care and discerning about the appropriate moments for both. The mugwort has come back to the neighbourhood. We drink tea, and smoke mugwort cigarettes and teach each other new skills. We stage our attacks and build something bigger. We are transforming ourselves in the process.

My actual life: harvesting mugwort from the vacant lots. Taking it as a tincture years later, when the mugwort fields are now condos. Trying to heal from a bad break up. Trying to figure out how not to focus so much of my life on automatically taking care of everyone all the time. Exploding the care imperative in order to find more space to think about revolutionary anarchism and revolutionary strategy but feeling guilty while doing it, not feeling smart enough. Not knowing where this leads me but finding comfort in knowing that I am not alone. **I never was alone.**



ON A COMET’S TAIL – Migration, Revolution, Movement

I’m starting this newsletter just a couple days after a newly rediscovered comet passed the closest point to Earth in its long orbit around the sun. NASA astronomers call the icy celestial body C/2022 E3 (ZTF), which I think is a rather disrespectful name, so I’ll call it Greeny. They also claim to have discovered the comet, when in fact they’ve rediscovered it. Even if we think of only humans as discoverers, Greeny passed by here 50,000 years ago and was certainly noticed by contemporary humans.

I wasn’t able to see Greeny, it’s been cloudy in these parts, and sadly, the only people I’ve spoken with who managed to see it complained about its lack of a visible tail, the difficulty they had distinguishing any visible coloration about it. I feel pretty bad for Greeny that they directed their complaints cometwards. Anyone who knows, knows that the comet’s not to blame. The light pollution of our present civilization damages our view of the heavens and all the things zipping around in it [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg50*]. Our civilization is an expert in getting us to blame the victims of its violence, though, so no surprises there. Sensible people would engage in acts of sabotage and terrorism against lit up

shopping centers and national power grids every time a clear night sky failed to offer up the gift of a million stars. **But we live in a time without sensible people.** These days, it takes too much courage to be sensible.

En lieu of seeing Greeny, I tried imagining them. And I tried imagining the people who saw them on their last pass, fifty thousand years ago. More specifically, since I think frequently about intergenerational memory and social evolution, I tried imagining my ancestors when they saw a glorious and unprecedented green body streaking across the heavens, fifty thousand years ago.

For me, it is vital that any foray into ancestry begin with the recognition that there is nothing objective about tracing lineage and descent. From the very first moment, it is a project, a choice, a weighted decision that I will identify with these other ones. From top to bottom, it's a construction. This does not mean that it is artificial, in the sense of false (but yes artificial in the etymological sense, artifice and construct being synonyms). **At least in the human experience, with consciousness, questions of identification are rarely far behind.**

Nuclear families, descent through the patriline or the matriline, these are cultural artifacts, strategies for identification that have existed in some human societies and not in others, together with identification with a clan, identification with a famous elder, identification with a war leader, identification with a deity, with a sacred place, with an idea.

More often than not I identify with my anarchist ancestors, those people who rose up against the authoritarian and exploitive structures of their time and place. They are the ones I have learned the most from, the ghosts in whose company I feel the most comfortable. But I can't find those ancestors when I look back fifty thousand years. The meaning of rebellion and freedom has changed so much over the ages. I feel confident that Olga Taratuta,¹ Ōsugi Sakae,² and Alexander Berkman [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg86*] would recognize me as kin, would feel that the torch I carry together with my comrades today is one they passed onto us.

1 ed. – So-called grandmother of Russian anarchism (1876-1938); multiple prison escapee, underground fighter of the Black Banner group, expropriator, supporter of prisoners.
2 ed. – Anarchist and theorist in early 20th century Japan.

'NATURE DEFENDING ITSELF' [France]

We sabotaged the 225,000 Volts pylon on the main line that supplies electricity to the chemical-industrial center of Salindres (the company Arkema and others) [December, 2022].

Method:

- 1) Saw the transversal bars.
Note: These are the bars that connect the legs together.
- 2) Saw with oblique cuts on the two legs in the direction of the fall.
Note: The pylon must fall perpendicular to the cables.
- 3) Saw with straight cuts on the same two legs about 30 cm above the previous cuts.
Note: Saw all the way to the end to have a fully detachable piece.
- 4) Strike the sawn pieces still held in place by the gravity of the pylon with a battering ram.
Note: a small tree trunk can be used
- 5) While the pylon is falling, move away with small steps in the opposite direction.

Note: hacksaws and oil are sufficient to perform this action.

Let's attack the companies that poison the earth!

Whether in large groups during occupations/demonstrations or in small groups during sabotage/arsons.

Strength to the individuals in struggle in France, Germany and elsewhere.

If the targets are too well protected, attacking the electricity allows you to cut upstream, while putting yourself in less danger.

Let's go on the offensive! Occupations, sabotage, arsons...

We do not defend nature, we are **nature defending itself.**

Resistance Fighters

[transl. – For a similar method with more details, see *Insurrection Magazine #4*, page 26: archive.org/details/Insurrection4/page/n25/mode/2up]



04.09.22: Bio Bio region of Wallmapu (see *Return Fire* chap.3 pg59), pylon felled (adjoining ones damaged) with dynamite, banner left: "Let's activate sabotage against the extractivist projects in the territories. Whoever forgets the prisoners, forgets the struggle. Freedom for Victor Llanquileo [ed. – framed Mapuche activist; see *Return Fire* vol.1.3 pg59] and all the Mapuche, anarchist, and subversive prisoners, and the prisoners from the revolt [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars*; 'The Latest Chapter of This Story']."

I don't feel the same confidence of recognition or kinship when I imagine the people who overthrew their contemporary states in Mycenae and Assyria in 1150 BCE or at Tiwanaku in 1000 CE. I think what they did was right, and I think if I had grown up amongst them I would have joined in, but I think it's very possible that self and my current self would conceptualize our actions in completely different ways and set our sights on opposed horizons.

I don't completely reject the idea of biological kin, even though the inference of shared biology between parents and children is often mistaken. But, for better or worse, a great deal of care occurs in our family structures. Even if it is often poisonous it generally gives us life. And we learn a great deal about our history and our place in the world within our families, even if it can also be a school of hard knocks.

What have I learned from the southern Anglo-Saxon alcoholics or the austere Dutch Calvinist farmers who gave me my eight last names? (Eight last names is an Iberian concept – referring now to my adopted home and adopted families of the last decade and a half – that normalizes knowing one's ancestry at least to the remove of the great grandparents, the eight people three degrees back who had to exist for each of us to be on this earth.)

I have learned a lot about how we got here. I've learned that there are many ways for white people to participate in oppressive systems, even when they're poor, and I've learned what's required of poor whites to climb into the middle class in the US, and I've learned that even people who come from a lineage of docility and conformity can be beautiful, can nourish you, can stand up for what they think is right, can teach you worthy lessons, can make huge mistakes and still deserve love. Other times, I've learned you need to let some people go, family or no. Then there are those folks who have gone so far beyond any bounds of decency, you've got to spit on their memory, curse their name, especially if they're family.

In any case, my ancestors fifty thousand years ago were probably decent enough people. As near as I can tell, the humans I descend from were hunter-gatherers living on the shores of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, and in sheltered valleys in the Caucasus. They probably ventured out into the tundra-like steppe to the north of them to hunt during the summers, tracking and bringing down huge mammals that no

longer walk this earth. They ranged west occasionally into Anatolia, east into the Zagros Mountains of what's now Iran, south along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, where other peoples lived.

Their ancestors had left Africa five to twenty thousand years earlier, or two hundred to a thousand generations ago, so they must have felt pretty at home in those lands between the Black and Caspian Seas. Unlike the earliest and the fastest groups that followed the subtropical coastal regions eastward, they learned how to adapt to the light temperate forests, the dry shrub and grasslands and their freezing winters. The planet was about 5C colder (than the pre-industrial mean) back then. In recent memory, a couple or a couple dozen generations, the temperatures had gotten warmer, but since then it had been cooling again.

At the time a great green comet appeared in the sky, they occasionally crossed paths with Neanderthals, or at least knew of people who did. Sometimes even had babies with them, though that was probably a pretty weird occurrence, or a sacred one, or the subject of a lot of jokes.



What did Greeny mean to them? **They knew the stars intimately, and this one would have moved unlike all the others. They probably didn't believe in gods, that came a lot later, but they lived in a magical world, in which dreaming was important, and life was sacred, and spirits came and went and could inhabit different bodies.** Did they take it as a warning of the winters getting harsher, the ice sheets which had begun to move south? Or did they connect it to something more local, something more ephemeral that left no trace for us to consider fifty thousand years later?

The anarchist in me wonders what revolutions were like back then. Modern hunter-gatherers are, in the majority, intelligently and consciously anti-authoritarian. How did they get that way? Was there

some nomadic regime of arrogance and insult that they overthrew and learned to never reconstitute again? No hunter-gatherer society has displayed a material inequality, but there are some that had inequalities in status or were weakly patriarchal, others that carried out occasional bloodshed against their neighbors. Did the rebels of the day take Greeny as a harbinger of revolution and raise a rallying cry against the injustices they had normalized for too long?

However my ancestors took the comet's appearance, whatever changes they incorporated in its aftermath, they kept on doing and learning, because within five thousand years, some of them learned the technologies necessary to live permanently in the arid steppe that covered northern Asia and most of Europe at that point. What was it like when they left? I talk about leaving, because I'm descended from the ones who stayed.

Twenty thousand years later, another eternity, some of them settled more permanently in Anatolia, leaving the Caucasus behind (fifteen millennia later the Anatolian branch would shift from hunting and gathering to planting and harvesting). Others, ten millennia later, 35,000 years after a green comet passed by, would move into Europe, replacing the last of the original wave of hunter-gatherers who had settled there and barely survived the onslaught of glaciers as the temperatures continued to drop.

Those who stayed would witness the collapse of the first empires on the planet, just to the south. They probably took in a number of refugees from those early revolutions, they probably learned warfare to defend themselves against the slavers and tree-cutters employed by those early states. Later they would learn how to domesticate and ride horses, and even fight from horseback. These three branches of my family tree – the Anatolian farmers, the European hunter-gatherers, and the Caspian herders and horse-riders – would, in separate waves, reunite in the very lands that my families today remember as their countries of origin.

I hesitated to explore the present topic in a newsletter precisely because the practice of mapping a genomic history is so fraught these days, largely thanks to websites like ancestry.com and 23andMe that have been expropriating the human genome – a profitable data set with key uses for policing and the pharmaceutical industry – while masquerading as service providers, in large part to angry North American white people who have no culture outside the market and are eager

for a new identity, a connection to a putatively stable European ethnicity complete with its own traditions and clichés.

(I recognize the service can mean something entirely different for the descendants of kidnapped or migrant ancestors, but for now I'm focusing on the majority clientele.)

Part of the damage these sites do is to pass on the fiction that genes and ancestry are the same. Adoptions and infidelities – consented or clandestine – make up a sizable minority of cases in human familial/reproductive history. In other words, your parents aren't always your parents. And traditions, culture, historical memory, ancestry, are not packaged up in our DNA. The recent practice of genomic history for the people completely elides that reality.

These companies also present the fiction that genes inhere to national borders. Instead of telling their customers that their genetic markers can be found in people who resided in Scandinavia or the British Isles, for example, a thousand years ago, they claim a person's genes are Scandinavian or British. This elides the entire history of movement I sketched out above.

Set the genomic clock to fifty thousand years, and every alienated white person anxious for an ancestry they don't actually have a connection to would be told their genes are Georgian/Azerbaijani. Set it back a hundred thousand years, and every single human who offered up their DNA would be told their ancestors are either from East Africa or southern Africa.

Notice that this culturally loaded deployment of science is also happening at a time when many countries that people are tracing their ancestries back to are tightening their borders [ed. – see *Statement on the Menilla Massacre*], which is a euphemism for when the government that occupies a certain country prepares to kill more people in order to restrict the movement that has been an inherent part of our species since the beginning.



And that's what really stands out from my little exploration, trying to figure out where my ancestors were fifty thousand years ago. For so much of their history, they were constantly in motion. A surprising tally of millennia, though, consisted of the cyclical migrations of temperate climate hunter-gatherers shifting between summer and winter activities. Or they ranged far afield but still came back to one particular corner of the globe, again and again over a vast distance of time.



What would it feel like to have such a deep connection to a place? One of the features of whiteness is that to be white means you can never know the answer to that question [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg89*]. But more and more people around the globe are being forced into movement by desertification, by flooding, by war, by poverty, by all those things entangled. And as they move, they find harsher and harsher obstacles. If the move itself is traumatic, are people forced to forget the place that was their home for generations, so they don't have to remember the violence that forced them out?

Movement can have many flavors. As a free choice, it can be exhilarating. What did it feel like to move into the tundra, when no humans had done that before? What did it feel like to erect megaliths, a temple, and live in one place all year round, eventually teaching the plants to grow where you wanted to eat them? What did it feel like to mount up on horses and ride across the steppe, across the very continent?



“Capital and Empire merely pretend its own apocalypse, its own slaughter doesn't exist. But so do we. Our disenchantment is mere denial, springing from our separation from the land and ourselves. It's horrifying to make a connection between the places we live and the rivers of blood and sagas of sorrow which cleared the land[...] the way we separate aspects of our being, classify our activities, and Enclose certain experiences from other experiences, living disjointed, fractured existences, alienated from and terrified of interwoven threads of meaning.” – *Bastard Children of a Slaughtering Empire*

Some of the moves would have been sad, or urgent, looking for abundant food in the occasional havoc wreaked by rising and falling temperatures, the advance and retreat of glaciers. **Sometimes we would have wanted to leave behind things of our own doing.** I've been reminded recently of how trauma can inhabit a place. In my current job, I drive a repetitive route, and I can feel the anxiety prick up in my chest every time I approach the intersection where I almost got in an accident weeks ago. Such a small thing, and yet I'd still avoid that place if my job didn't require me to return. So strange, having to go through the motions, so different from the ability to wander.

What would it have been like to live in a beautiful place, a magical place, a place with good water and good hunting, your favorite berries bountiful every fall. And then, a conflict ill-resolved leads to bloodshed with a related community, a couple people you've cared about your whole life, dead. Maybe you would go to live with distant relatives in the mountains a month's journey west, maybe the whole community would pack up and go to live somewhere else, at least for a generation, to not have to be reminded every day of their loss. **What does it mean when you're forced to inhabit cursed ground?**

Movement has always been a part of life. Some moves leave us no return, others are cyclical, like the revolutions of an occasionally passing comet. Other moves are necessary for our health, our survival. And some take us into a relationship with the world that is so insatiable, so cruel, it will cost us many generations to extricate ourselves.

But nothing is still. Not even in death. I wonder where Greeny will find us on the next pass. What things will we pass on to future generations? Of all we have poisoned, and all we have grown. Of all we have learned, and all we have mistaken.

WANDERING AMONG RUINS

Wherever I have been... rows of chairs, round the walls, round the tables, round the demarcated areas... school, psych ward, office, nursing home, prison?

Names listed, numbered, checked, grouped... defined.

Doors locked, sealed, checked, secure... confined. Behaviour noted, judged, reduced, boxed, forced... suppressed.

Hierarchy – (overt and covert) – pressing in, enclosing, watching, noting... suffocated.

Time linear, rigid, straight, counted... divided.

Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock... the hours, the unending hours... tick tock, tick tock, tick tock... mind is drifting, somewhere, anywhere...

refocus... tick tock, tick tock, tick tock, tick tock... mind drifts... a glimpse of Eden, a wholeness, a bigger picture... snapped out of that... tick tock, tick tock, tick tock...

A barrier erected, another enclosure, physical / psychological / spiritual. My specialisation has been my definition, my *modus vivendi* [ed. – *arrangement that allows conflicting parties to coexist in peace*], it has kept me, separated me, it has been my meaning – my school, psych ward, office, nursing home, prison.

This is the climate change of the mind. Devastation leads to yet more devastation. Tipping points appear to loom up ahead. Another head filled with dichotomized thinking, barely able to comprehend my own species (let alone an intricate web of life). Distress becomes something to be deflected... washed in clichés... Grow up, try to fit in, this is for your safety.

That glimpse of Eden, that lost wholeness... it keeps coming back. Forced away by conformity. Snapped out of. But it keeps coming back.

This myth of Eden, it is strong and often it feels stronger than its brother, the myth of progress with which I have been told I must participate. **Those Mesolithic footprints stretching across the mud on the banks of the Severn, they resonate, beyond logic and into the visceral experience of emotion.** There are more, footprints that will never be found. Think of Dogger Land [ed. – *an area of hills, marshland and heavily wooded valleys at the heart of Europe joining eastern Britain and modern Belgium, the Netherlands and southern Scandinavia roamed by foraging peoples at end of the last major ice age, depopulated due to glaciers melting and/or a tsunami and now claimed by the sea; a situation now faced by billions within 60km of current coasts*], now just a refrain “Dogger bank” for the sake of ships and the weather they will meet.

This land lost to rising seas would be walkable from my birthplace on the only hill in a flat land. The never to be found footprints. **It probably would have been walked, not so many generations ago, by the wanderers who shifted with the seasons. From high to low, along rivers, through woods... but not over stiles or through gates.**

Even fewer generations ago people sailed over flooded Dogger Land from their shoreline, looking for freedom, to a “new” land, to join a “new” genocide when faced with some more wanderers who shifted with the seasons, **from high to low, along rivers, through woods... but not over stiles or through gates.**

Inundations from the sea, arrivals of agriculture, languages lost, fences erected, fleeing to the “new” world to found a sprawling city of a familiar name. Collapse has visited my birthplace before. The shape of streets and buildings seen in the turf at Gainsthorpe [ed. – *deserted medieval village in Lincolnshire, England*]. Walking distance from the hill in the flat land. Collapse here had come as disease born of domesticates and carried west on trade routes. Plague.

I have been carried west of the hill in the flat land. Carried in that post-modern rootless way [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg87*], a mixture of ego, hubris and anxiety. Continuing the westward flow from the wreckage of the Fertile Crescent [ed. – *the area of the Middle East where arose the first States to eventually spawn those to conquer these isles; see Fredy Perlman's 'Against His-story, Against Leviathan!'*]. Not as far as the Mayflower [ed. – *ship bearing early British colonists of so-called North America across the Atlantic in 1620*], but still west. There is a more immediate resonance in this place west, amidst an old language of the Britons. Wanderers can be felt in that visceral way on the heights of Plynlimon [ed. – *also spelled Pumlumon in Welsh: highest point of the Cambrian mountains*] and Cefn Bryn [ed. – *ridge of common land with ancient burial cairns and monument on the Gower peninsular, Wales*]. The red “lady” of Paviland [ed. – *oldest known ceremonial burial in western Europe; dyed in red ochre and buried on the Gower Peninsula, to which it is called to be returned*] is close and watches over his broad plain to Exmoor. The footprints stretch into the mud...

Kindred, however, is east. Drawn on walls at Creswell Crags [ed. – *site in England between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire; northernmost cave art in Europe*], wandering through post-glacial woods. Before the fences, seeds and hierarchies arrived from the Fertile Crescent. **Before coal was torn from this ground and industry left its wreckage as it retreated to find “new” lands.** Other things resonate as my kindred in the east, near the only hill in a flat land. The myth-history of Sherwood [ed. – *part of Nottinghamshire wooded since the last Ice Age, legendary for its association with medieval Robin Hood who robs the rich to help the poor*] can be visceral on a misty autumn day lost amidst the oaks, with only a bike for company. Wanderers again, this time seeking refuge from a king or a baron or a law.

Maybe it was the hands of my kin that decorated those Creswell walls and wandered and left footprints and knew the seasons. **Wandering from high to low, along rivers, through woods...**

Collapse visited as it will visit my life, and maybe then I will wander not so far from the land of my birth... with the wreckage all around.

AGAINST THE STRUGGLE OF THE COWARD

– a note of strength for the underdogs

struggle against all the odds, and amidst all the risks. Our pride and praxis is one the police and fascists could never understand. A lack of comprehension that manifests deeply in their daily disgrace; the only reason such scum can sleep at night.

Struggle is a trajectory that functions with or without hope of victory. Struggle pertains to the maintaining of a position, the preservation of a conviction, and the refusal to forfeit integrity. Struggle is a risky endeavor; emotionally, psychologically, and in many cases physically.

The anarchist position is by far the most controversial of all political struggles. We can never turn to any border for asylum, nor any official for protection. We function without faith in society's flaunted matrix of so-called rights. We function without an expectation of victory, and we fall in line with an affinity of organic desire and passion; rather than a prescribed ideology or organization [ed. – see **'Not Fighting the Same Fight'**].

Our anger is that of the excluded; so we can expect to be underfunded. We work towards the impossible, so we can expect the relentless wrath of capitalism's rationality [ed. – see **'The Principle of Reciprocity'**]; degrading our hope. We can expect the full repressive force of the existent, as we call for the most radical of change.

The police are cowards. All fascists are cowards. The beneficiaries and defenders of this post-colonial tragedy known as the western world [ed. – see the companion piece to **Return Fire vol.3; Colonisation**] are cowards. They both function to re-enforce and preserve the existent. They are supported by the status quo, and can find comfort in cogs of the current system that maintains it. **They do not dream, and reside solely in the superficial.** More than anything we want to stress that they do not take risk. They do not engage in struggle, they are only obstacles to the struggle for freedom; cowardly treading on every revolutionary and sincere gesture of self-preservation, self-determination, and self-defense against conditions of despotism.

There are many definitions of a coward. For ourselves, we see the most pathetic of cowards as the ones who take pride in riskless behavior. **We are not deeply impressed by a sanctioned street mural painted with the permission of authorities, but we always find a deep appreciation for a vandal's art that flowers in the shadows of risk.** Ask yourself; are you impressed by a group of cops who beat a man, or by the man risking death and prison to defend himself against those same cops?

The pride of police, and the praxis of fascists is embarrassing. When we take to the streets, we are risking everything. We are risking prison, and death. We are risking everything without anything. We function and

Have you ever seen someone strip a screw while drilling? Drilling into an already fastened screw for no other reason than an obsession to reassure themselves of what already is? It is a volatile noise paired to an embarrassing action. An anthem to the heartless goals of the fascist. This fool who tries to drill the screw further and further is the mascot of the cop, patriot, and fascist.

In light of the terrifying times we live in, and the methods used to enforce them, we want to take a moment to encourage an appreciation for standing strong, and finding victory in this held ground alone.

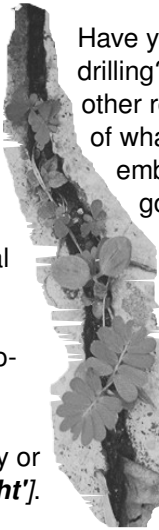
Anarchists take the inconvenient route, or the road less travelled per se. We choose prison over snitching. We choose risk over comfort. We choose possibilities over coercive realities.

We find ourselves within a common love and solidarity among the excluded, the repressed, the oppressed, the discontent, the hungry, and the miserable. We fight side by side with strangers of a common enemy, whether in the streets or in the night. We suffer disappointment, but never give in to the easy judgments capitalism encourages us to have in order to divide us (For example: blaming other poor people for stealing your job, while ignoring the rich whose position depends on your precarity; we have the subtle empowerment of always knowing where to appropriately place blame.).

We are always challenging ourselves to grow; fighting the conditioning of our minds by the existent. No true struggle is pure and clean [ed. – see **Earthbound Farmers' Almanac & Food Autonomy in Bulbancha**], it is a never-ending battle towards a dream guided by desire and conviction. We have never known true freedom before the coercive reality of this daily life, but we seek what our hearts tell us, not our masters.

The state, its beneficiaries, and all those who defend it will never understand what it means to not be a coward. They will reappropriate our rhetoric to appease the rebellious nature of every human; but it is just another embarrassing act. They are not worthy of respect.

While maintaining hope is a struggle in itself, we take pride in the continued refusal to ever give in to hopelessness. We take pride in dreaming and refusing to accept this stratified and terrible world enforced upon the earth and our humanity. Whether or not we win, we must remember, we are not cowards. **They are.**



**English-language
anarchist news &
information exchange**

Act For Freedom Now! (Greece & global) actforfree.noblogs.org

Anarchist Library (multi-lingual, open-source catalogue of print-ready texts) theanarchistlibrary.org

Anarchy in Action (global, anarchies past and present and their inspirations) anarchyinaction.org

Anarchy, Secession, Subsistence (rejoining rebellion with the land) anarchysecessionsubsistence.blogspot.ca

A-News Podcast (weekly curation of selected posts and topics for those without time to read anarchistnews.org) podcast.anarchistnews.org

Autonomy News (UK & global) autonomynews.org

Bad News (collaborative presentation every month from audio shows across the world) aradio-berlin.org/en/tag/badnews

Counter-Surveillance Resource Center (multi-lingual) csrc.link

Earth First! UK (direct-action, leaderless eco-defence) earthfirst.uk

Indigenous Action (radical perspectives from occupied homelands) indigenouaction.org

Knowing the Land is Resistance (re-enchantment and reconnection) knowingtheland.com

The Local Kids (compiled translations from international voices in struggle) thelocalkids.noblogs.org

Montreal Counter-Information (Canada, bi-lingual) mtlcounterinfo.org

Non-Fides (France & global, multi-lingual) non-fides.fr

Oplopanax Publishing (a cache of handsome and engaging printable zines) oplopanaxpublishing.wordpress.com

Resonance Audio Distro (various readings as MP3s plus source files) resonanceaudiodistro.wordpress.com

Segadores (multi-lingual, anti-colonial anarchist analysis and translation) segadores.alscarrers.org

Warrior Up (sabotage techniques) warriorup.noblogs.org

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(anonymous if unlisted)**

'Reclaim Your Queer Fucking Life!'

– from from Reclaim
Pride Brighton

'Techno-Sharia, Morality Police & Psychoplice'

– from ilrovescio.info

**'Reconciliation is Dead.
Revolution is Alive.'**

– from unistoten.camp

'For the Love of God'

– by Alex Gorrion

**'An Attempt at
Interdependence
Storytelling/Worldmaking'**

– from *Entanglement: on
Anarchism &
Individualism*

'On a Comet's Tail'

– by Peter Gelderloos

'Wandering Among Ruins'

– from *Modern Madness*,
by Ed Lord

**'Against the Struggle of the
Coward'**

– from itsgoingdown.org

Articles referenced by title throughout this chapter in **[square brackets]** which do not appear in the previous pages appear in the other chapters of this volume.

This chapter of Return Fire comes with a supplement; **A Poem by Kenneth Rexroth, Painted across the Rooftops of the World**. If not included with this magazine, find the PDF online at our site.



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